

FOREST RIVER CIVIC ASSOCIATION WELCOME LETTER

Welcome to Forest River, a subdivision in Wheeling Township. We are the oldest subdivision in unincorporated Cook County. Some of the 240 houses date back to 1935. What makes us unique is our rich history, quarter or half-acre lots, low property taxes, and our own wells. Our focal point is the Civic Hall, located at 207 Lee Street. It is a place for meetings, parties, and polling for local, state, and federal elections. It is a place where the Forest River Civic Association has continued the annual tradition of organizing potluck dinners, game nights, and Forest River Day for all our residents. We also own the park and land adjacent to the Civic Hall where kids can use the playground equipment. We have three taxing bodies that hold monthly meetings at our Civic Hall. The Forest River Lighting District levies taxes and arranges for street lighting in our neighborhood, the Forest River Sanitary District levies taxes for and arranges maintenance and upgrades to our sewer system, and the Forest River Fire Protection District, which owns the Civic Hall and Playground, levies taxes for and contracts with the Mount Prospect Fire Department. To keep the Civic Hall open, we need to raise \$20,000 annually to pay for the utilities and maintain the building and the playground. The money comes from hall rentals and voluntary dues of \$50 per household, and \$35 for senior citizens. Residents who pay their annual dues are entitled to the Civic Hall rental. It's \$250 per event on the weekend, and \$50 per hour on weekdays. Funeral gatherings are free of charge.

WE INVITE YOU TO OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS AT THE CIVIC HALL ON THE FIRST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH AT 7 PM

Short History of Forest River

According to a map from 1861, Forest River was a large farm.

In 1935, it was divided into half-acre lots and sold for \$250 to \$300. The buyers had to put \$1 down and pay \$1 a week. Many people forfeited their loans and lost their homes during the Great Depression. Those who paid off their loans built their new homes themselves with whatever materials they could find. Forest River was nicknamed "Mudville" because the streets were made by plowing the sides. Every time it rained, the roads were impassable. Life in the 1930s was different from what it is today. There was no running water, no electricity, no phones and no roads. Most of the people had vegetable gardens, chickens, horses, ponies and goats. The wells were dug by hand about 30 feet deep. If the wells dried out, residents would go to a pump in the forest preserve across River Road, and haul water back in milk cans. Life has changed. The roads have been paved and the shacks were replaced with elegant houses. The focal point of our subdivision is the Civic Hall. From 1946 to 1966 it housed the first Volunteer Fire Department. The first fire trucks, siren, and water pump were purchased with money donated by the residents. Before 1946, the volunteer Fire Department was housed in the barn at 420 River Road. The barn and the adjacent house go back to 1916. They are the oldest structures in our subdivision. If you would like to learn more about the history of Forest River visit our website at forestrivercivicassociation.org.

90TH ANNIVERSARY OF FOREST RIVER

1935-2025

The earliest record of our subdivision goes back to 1861. A map of the area shows a 440-acre farm owned by McPherson, later sold to the Coons family, Nagel family, the Rice family, and finally in 1915 the Merrions. The Merrion's farm stretched from Morrison to Gregory, and the Rice farm stretched from Kensington to Morrison. In 1935, the Merrions subdivided their farm into 73 lots through Welsh Realty. The Jim Rice farm was also sold to the Morrison Company to be developed into either a golf course or an airport. The deal fell through, and in 1935, the Welsh Realty company started dividing the land.

Half-acre lots were selling for as little as \$225 and no more than \$300. The buyers had to put \$1.00 down and pay \$1.00 per week. The interest, 6%, was very high at that time. Many people forfeited on their \$1.00 weekly payments and lost their homes during the Great Depression. Those who paid off their loans built their new homes themselves with whatever materials they could find. Those lots, in unincorporated Wheeling Township, ultimately became a subdivision formally known as Forest River. The name was given to us due to the proximity of the Des Plaines River and Forest Preserve. It was nicknamed "Mudville" because it was one of the last subdivisions in the area to get paved roads. The streets were made by plowing the sides. Every time it rained, the roads were impassable. Life in the 1930s was different from what it is today. There was no running water, no electricity, no phones, and no roads. Most of the people had vegetable gardens, chickens, horses, ponies, and goats. The wells were dug by hand about 30 feet deep. If the wells dried out, residents would go to a pump in the forest preserve across River Road, and haul water back in a milk can. The utilities such as electric, was extended in the late 1930s, the telephone was available in 1949, and gas was brought in 1956.

The community building was built in the 1940s. The Volunteer Fire Department shared the south end of the building from 1946-1966.

The oldest structures in our subdivision are located at 420 River Rd. The house and the barn date back to 1916. The barn was used to house our volunteer Fire Department until 1946. Another historic barn from 1900's, was the Hapsburg Inn, owned by W. Bahnmaier. He ran this German American restaurant for 50 years (1934 to 1984). It employed many of the Forest River residents. People used to come from Chicago on their horses to eat German food. The building was sold and later replaced with townhouses. To learn more about Forest River history, visit our Civic Hall.

