



The City of Lake Forest
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NEWS RELEASE

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Lake Forest, Illinois Observes 75th Year of Council-Manager Form of Municipal Government and a Celebration of Family - Education - Tradition - Philanthropy

The City of Lake Forest is celebrating its 75th anniversary of a governance system or partnership between the City Council and City Manager known as the “Council-Manager” form of government. Mayor Donald P. Schoenheider will present City Manager Robert R. Kiely with a Resolution at the City Council’s May 5 meeting.

Today, the core concepts of Family, Education, Tradition and Philanthropy define The City of Lake Forest, Illinois and have defined the community throughout its 153-year history. Lake Forest is known for its creative culture, the energetic spirit of its founders and residents and a philanthropic philosophy. Successful business people, entrepreneurs, actors, writers, architects, educators and shopkeepers have made Lake Forest their home town, and continue to contribute to this vibrant community of thoughtful planners on a daily basis.

With an area of approximately 17 square miles, Lake Forest is home to 19,375 people. Its Charter permits Lake Forest “to be administered effectively and economically with a minimum number of separate government bodies.” Lake Forest is noted for the quality and character of its residential, religious, education and public architecture. These factors give Lake Forest its significance, which also make the estate areas of residential Lake Forest historically and visually distinctive. Its unusual location high on a bluff and its equally rare early picturesque plan make Lake Forest a unique place of special historical and physical presence. New residents are drawn to the City and families choose to stay because of Lake Forest’s diverse neighborhoods, acres of native open lands, beach, parks, quaint business districts (including Market Square), access to railroad transportation, beautiful streetscapes, unique homes, religious institutions, outstanding public school system and state-of-the-art, top-rated hospital.

In 1939, Lake Forest adopted the “Council-Manager” governance model that had previously been implemented by its North Shore neighbors to the south. Because the City Council is comprised of eight Volunteer Aldermen (two from each of four wards) and a Volunteer Mayor, this form of local government has served overwhelmingly well, abiding by the philanthropic culture which thrives in the town. The Mayor is elected every two years for a two-year term and Aldermen are elected to staggered two-year terms with one Aldermen elected from each ward annually. Public service prevails, and in one form or another, volunteerism is evident and encouraged in each Lake Forest household.

Prior to the Council-Manager governance, the City was administered by the Business Manager, who had no real experience beyond budgeting and accounting. Today, the typical and preferred background and education for the beginning municipal manager is a Master's Degree in Public Administration (MPA) and at least several years of experience as a department head in local government or as an Assistant City Manager. More than 60% of those in the profession had a MPA, MBA, or other related higher-level degree.

The Lake Forest City Council serves as the legislative and policy making body of the City. The City Manager’s responsibilities are to oversee the day-to-day operations of the City, including enforcement of ordinances, recommendations of policy and policy alternatives to the City Council and the preparation of an annual budget for the Council’s review. To date, Lake Forest has been served by a total of eight City Managers, who have worked with 29 Mayors and City Councils (almost 200 volunteers), including James King (1933-1944), John McNicol (1944-1949), Neil Campbell (1949-1955), William Douglas (1955-1964), Paul Reaume (1964-1972), Gerald Hagman (1972-1979), John Fischbach (1979-1990) and Robert R. Kiely, Jr. (1990-present).

In addition to the City Council, over 100 Lake Forest resident volunteers serve on 19 Boards and Commissions annually. These bodies help provide leadership, establish policy and oversee budgets and make recommendations to the City Council. Additionally, to ensure open and responsive governance, the Mayor, City Council and Boards and Commissions are recruited by the non-partisan Lake Forest Caucus system. Since 1935, the Lake Forest Caucus has been an organization of “volunteers seeking volunteers” to serve The City of Lake Forest.

The City of Lake Forest received LEED Gold Certification recognition for its 2009 Municipal Services Building, a National Gold Medal Award for Parks and Recreation Management, and is awarded an annual Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association. Today, the City maintains a Aaa bond rating, and property taxes in Lake Forest are the lowest in the area. Through the collective efforts of the City Council-Manager governance, generous residents and a conscientious staff, the City’s long history of prudent, financially conservative and proactive fiscal practices will maintain Lake Forest as one of the country’s premier communities.

Mr. Kiely comments on his 24-year tenure experience: “The Council-Manager form of government has served the Lake Forest community extremely well for the past 75 years. The combination of very committed, civic-minded volunteers serving on policy-making Boards and Commissions and a talented, highly professional and responsive workforce creates an extremely effective government entity. The quality and character of our community is not the result of luck or good fortune, but rather the outcome of a vibrant caucus system and strong, business-like approach to delivering high-quality services.”

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