



PRESERVED for **YOU**

People and Projects
2023 Year in Review



Forest Preserve District of DuPage County





Throughout this review you'll see QR codes that will give you a deeper look into some of the year's important projects. To get you started, scan here to see some of the results of work completed at Springbrook Prairie.

Our Mission

To acquire and hold lands for the purpose of preserving the flora, fauna, and scenic beauty for the education, pleasure, and recreation of DuPage County citizens

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Pictured left to right: Al Murphy, Barbara O'Meara, Jeff Gahris, Daniel Hebreard, Marsha Murphy, Tina Tyson-Dunne, and Linda Painter

As we reflect on the past year, it is with great pleasure that I share with you the achievements and highlights of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County in our *2023 Year in Review*.

Throughout the year, our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to fulfill our mission of preserving and protecting the natural beauty and resources of DuPage County. From efforts to restore hundreds of acres of high-quality habitat to opening new trails and kicking off exciting capital projects, we are happy to undertake this important work – all preserved for you!

DuPage County forest preserves encompass thousands of acres of woodlands, prairies, wetlands, and waterways that not only contribute to cleaner air and water but also help with flood control and create vital habitats for local wildlife.

Open spaces hold rainwater, allowing it to slowly soak into roots and seep into soils that filter out chemicals before they can reach waterways or underground aquifers. Plants absorb pollutants such as carbon dioxide and particulate matter through tiny openings in their leaves and use them as nutrients or store them in their tissues.

In addition to our conservation initiatives, we also made significant progress in enhancing recreational opportunities within your preserves. From the development of new hiking trails to the improvement of existing amenities, we remain committed to providing diverse and accessible recreational experiences for all residents.

Of course, none of these accomplishments would have been possible without the tireless dedication of our staff, volunteers, and partners. Their passion and commitment to our shared mission have been instrumental in driving our success and ensuring the long-term sustainability of our preserves. Together, we have achieved remarkable progress in our efforts to conserve and protect our natural areas, and I am excited to continue this journey with you.

Daniel Hebreard
President, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County



The Bridges of Hidden Lake

On National Trails Day the Forest Preserve District marked the successful completion of a 2019 certified master plan project.

Routine inspections at Hidden Lake had revealed structural deficiencies in two aging bridges. Last fall the “lake bridge,” which is on the east side of Round Meadow Lake and part of a recreational trail encircling the water, was replaced with a 50-by-14-foot prefabricated truss bridge. The “river bridge,” a remarkable 50-foot-long, 11-foot-wide cast- and wrought-iron bowstring pony truss bridge dating back to the 1870s, underwent a meticulous monthslong restoration before it was reinstalled in its original location.



Connector Trail Improves Neighborhood Access to Danada

On Saturday, June 10, the Forest Preserve District celebrated the official opening of a new 0.4-mile-long, 10-foot-wide limestone trail at Danada. The segment, which links Cromwell Drive at Butterfield Road to the Danada-Herrick Lake Regional Trail, provides a safer and more convenient connection between Wheaton’s bicycle network and regional forest preserve trails that cross through 3,700 acres of open space, including Danada, Herrick Lake, Warrenville Grove, St. James Farm, and Blackwell forest preserves.

The Butterfield Road connector trail in Danada was awarded an Annual Achievement Award from the Coalition for Recreational Trails.



Springbrook Prairie Trail Connection Along Plainfield/Naperville Road

The 1,829-acre Springbrook Prairie is a birder’s paradise that features a state-designated nature preserve and land and water reserve as well as trails, picnic areas, an off-leash dog area, and a model-craft field. It also offers some of the best displays of summertime blooms.

Springbrook Prairie has an extensive and extremely popular trail system that boasts over 6 looped miles. Unfortunately, not all local visitors had easy access. But now, a trail segment connects the end of a neighborhood sidewalk to a trailhead that links to the Henslow’s and Sunflower trails as well as an underpass below Naperville-Plainfield Road, giving residents safer access to Springbrook Prairie, the Southern DuPage Regional Trail, and thousands of acres of open space.



Construction Started on Major Renovation Phase at Willowbrook Wildlife Center

After three years of planning, the Forest Preserve District broke ground on a reimagined Willowbrook Wildlife Center, which will be the District's first net-zero-designed facility and will feature a hospital, office, and learning center all rolled into one.

In early summer, the District completed work on new outdoor rehabilitation enclosures, including a 10,000-square-foot raptor barn. In late summer, work began on a 28,000-square-foot visitor center. At nearly \$30 million, this project will be the District's largest capital improvement project ever, but almost a third is funded by grants and private donations.

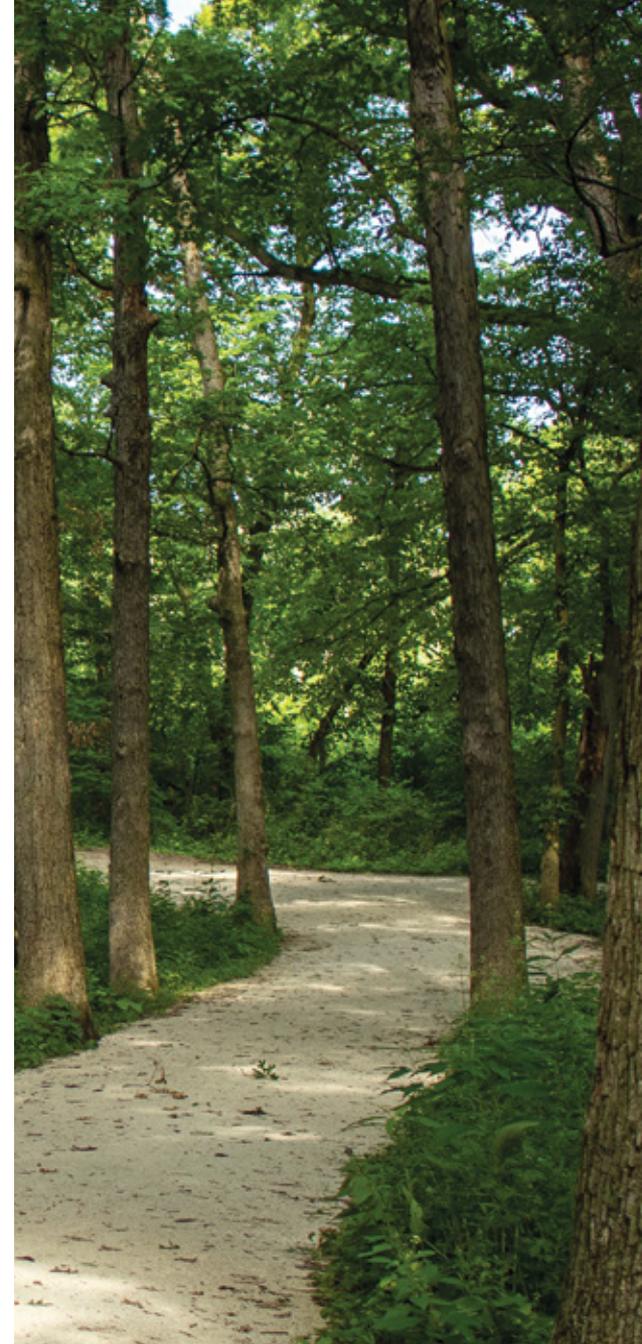
The facility will triple the size of the current indoor and outdoor rehabilitation enclosures, providing appropriate space and conditions

in accordance with national and international guidelines for wildlife rehabilitation based upon the center's existing annual intake numbers. Net-zero components will include ground-source heat pumps with 64 geothermal wells and a 603-kilowatt solar photovoltaic array. Energy-efficient heating and air conditioning equipment will feature building automation systems and various occupancy sensors.

In parallel with the construction activities, the District is preparing content and developing design plans for indoor and outdoor public-engagement activities and interpretive features.



The new Willowbrook Wildlife Center will be a transformational project that seeks to address climate change, protect biodiversity, promote the science of wildlife rehabilitation, and create positive experiences with nature (including wildlife) for future generations through state-of-the-art indoor and immersive outdoor interpretive features. The true benefit is that people will see firsthand their own connection to our environment and the wildlife affected by human activity while supporting a safe and efficient wildlife rehabilitation process.







A Face-Lift for Mayslake Hall

Time and the elements had worn heavily on the exterior of Mayslake Hall at Mayslake Peabody Estate, and over the years, leaks in the masonry damaged interior walls. A certified master plan project repaired structural deficiencies and other problems with the roof, masonry, wood, stucco, windows, doors, and foundation and improved drainage and accessibility.

Crews removed and repointed all mortar joints between the bricks and limestone and re-created and replaced the worst of the cracked limestone, all while preserving the carved faces, wild animals, and mythical creatures that adorn the building. The project used salvaged shingles that matched the originals to repair the slate roof. It replaced exterior wooden features and stucco and removed existing original windows and doors for restoration. Windows that had been replaced over the years with late-20th-century styles were

replaced with thermal-pane models designed to blend into the historic facade.

A failed drainage system around the foundation led to a wet basement, so crews excavated the old and installed a new perimeter system. They then graded the land to move water away from the foundation. The 100-year-old plumbing had also failed, so the project removed decades of rust from the sewer pipes and inserted a plastic liner cured in place with UV light. While all of this work was going on, crews also repaired sidewalks and parking areas to meet ADA regulations.

In September, the building hosted a special reopening event featuring the works of local artist Joel Sheesley, who for two years crisscrossed DuPage with his easel and paints, breathing in the scope and details of the DuPage River watershed as it rolls through numerous forest preserves and putting that life to canvas. His exhibit of 55 paintings invited viewers to join him and the Forest Preserve District in experiencing nature in their own ways.

In December, the hall hosted the return of the two-day Holiday Art and Craft Market that invited visitors to shop for quality artisan holiday gifts for family and friends. The event hadn't been held since 2019.

Year-round, the hall again offers guided tours, art exhibits and classes, and programs focusing on the connections between art and nature.





New Crossing at Waterfall Glen

In December at Waterfall Glen, the Forest Preserve District installed a permanent 62-by-14-foot pedestrian bridge over Sawmill Creek on the looped Main Trail.

In February 2022, the original 25-year-old bridge washed away when high waters carried large slabs of ice down the creek. Regulations related to a special-management floodway, floodplain, and wetland made it challenging to replace the structure with a permanent solution in a timely manner, but that summer the District was able to install a temporary bridge.

With an urgency to reopen the full popular looped trail and maintain public safety, the District used a steel girder bridge design to expedite permitting and construction while providing a simple, cost-effective, and lower-maintenance solution. The new bridge deck is 3 feet higher than its predecessor, minimizing future effects of ice damming of Sawmill Creek.



Improved Trail Accessibility at Fullersburg Woods

In fall the Forest Preserve District received a lightweight aluminum all-terrain wheelchair that can be easily pushed over dirt, gravel, rocks, grass, snow, and mud. 2LIV4, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a mission to enhance the emotional well-being of individuals who face physical or cognitive challenges, donated the new Extreme Motus Emma X3 wheelchair.

The wheelchair is available to reserve year-round at Fullersburg Woods Monday through Saturday by completing an online form on dupageforest.org or emailing accessibility@dupageforest.org.

The Forest Preserve District plans to add a second wheelchair to its inventory in the coming year, one that will be available through its headquarters office and delivered to requested preserves.



Solar Power

In June the Forest Preserve District completed construction and testing of a 260.2-kilowatt photovoltaic array at its fleet management facility. The facility houses the District's award-winning fleet of green vehicles, one of the best government small fleets in the country. It was fitting, therefore, that the building should be powered with renewable energy.

This is the District's fourth solar energy project and its largest to date. It consists of 532 495-watt panels in 18 strings of 20 to 30 panels per string and two inverters that will generate 324,000 kilowatt-hours of energy yearly, the equivalent of 100% to 110% of the facility's energy demand. It will benefit the environment by preventing over 230 metric tons of carbon from entering the atmosphere each year and will save the District over \$25,000 a year in energy costs.

The project also included the installation of a level-two electric vehicle charging station to support expansion of the District's electric fleet.

A \$100,000 donation and additional solar energy rebates along with the sale of energy credits will help the District achieve a complete return on the financial investment in under 10 years, although the return investment on the environment is immediate.



The Forest Preserve District is committed to a sustainable future. As a demonstrated leader in promoting green technologies with its adoption of a clean-energy sustainability and resiliency plan, the District is doing its part to help fight climate change and to ensure there are healthy local ecosystems and wildlife to contribute to healthy communities.



Financial Stewardship

The Forest Preserve District follows sound management principles in its commitment to the planning and use of financial resources. It maintains a AAA credit rating from Standard and Poor's based on strong financial operations, fiscally responsible reserves, and disciplined budgeting practices. This superior credit rating has enabled the District to attain successful bond sales over its history at very low interest rates.

The District is committed to open government and maintains a transparency portal on its website, dupageforest.org, under "About Us." The page includes links to comprehensive financial reports; information on bids, proposals, and contracts; and other District business.

Estimated Annual Property Taxes Paid to the Forest Preserve District



Funding Sources

DuPage County and Municipalities

- Property Tax
- Sales Tax
- Income Tax
- Motor Fuel Tax
- Hotel Tax
- Utility Tax
- Restaurant Tax
- User Fees

Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

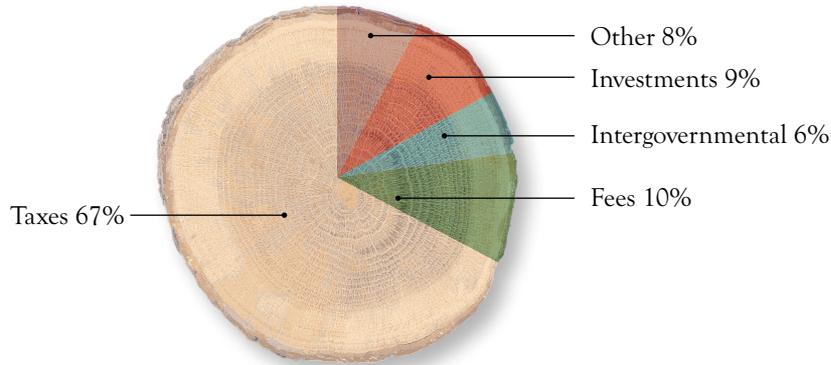
- Property Tax
- Grants
- Donations
- User Fees



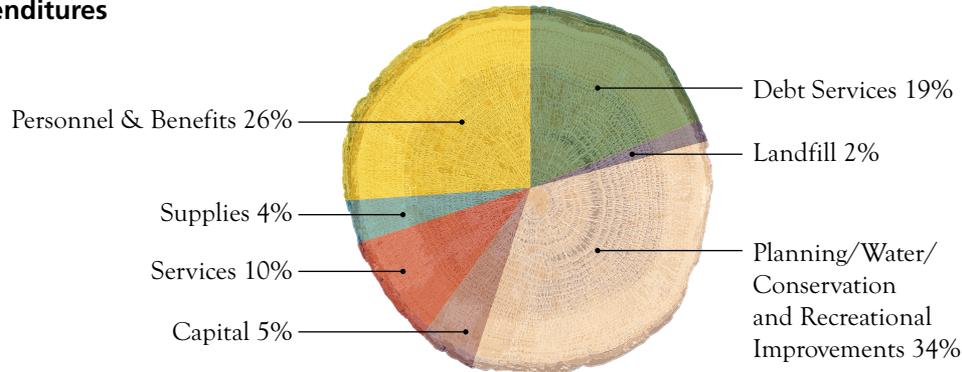
Less Than Two Cents of Every Property Tax Dollar Paid Goes to the Forest Preserve District



Revenues



Expenditures



The Government Finance Officers Association has awarded the Forest Preserve District its Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting 36 times. Participation in and recognition by the award program exemplify the District's commitment to sound financial practices and stewardship to the residents of DuPage County.

Grant Commitments From Federal, State, or Private Donors



Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation	\$2,000,000
Institute for Museum and Library Services	\$250,000
Ronald Bork Fund of the DuPage Foundation	\$180,400
Navistar, Inc.	\$90,000
TC Energy	\$49,000
Chicago Regional Trees Initiative Urban and Community Forest Grant	\$25,000
Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation	\$25,000
BNSF Railway Foundation	\$10,000
Chicago Regional Trees Initiative Thanks to Nicor	\$10,000
CNH Industrial	\$10,000
G. Carl Ball Family Foundation	\$10,000
The Conservation Foundation on Behalf of the West Chicago Prairie Stewards	\$6,611
ComEd/Exelon	\$5,000
Domtar Paper Company	\$5,000
Ecolab Foundation	\$5,000
Nicor	\$5,000
Mary J. Demmon Private Foundation	\$4,239
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	\$4,000



Public Safety

Safety in the preserves is a top priority for the Forest Preserve District. To that end, in 2023 its Law Enforcement department installed license plate recognition cameras at four preserves, bringing the total to nine. Four additional cameras are set to be installed in 2024.

To date, cameras are at Blackwell, Greene Valley, The Preserve at Oak Meadows, and Waterfall Glen and at off-leash dog areas at Greene Valley, Hawk Hollow, Mayslake, Oldfield Oaks, and Springbrook Prairie.

Statistics show a small steady decline in burglary to motor vehicles since the first installation of cameras with a significant 41% drop from 2022 to 2023. The cameras have benefits such as being a crime deterrent, providing instant alerts of vehicles related to criminal offenses, and serving as an investigative tool.

In 2023 the department traded in its oldest drone for a more advanced model with wide-angle and medium telephoto cameras and a 46-minute fly time. It acquired a second identical drone later in the year. The two are carried in the vehicles of on-duty licensed operators so officers can quickly deploy the drones for search-and-rescue calls. The drones are also available for use by other local law enforcement agencies.

Forest Preserve District officers also serve as ambassadors, prioritizing daily contact with the public. This allows for positive public engagement as officers provide information about programs and regulations and assist with vehicle lockouts and jump starts, permit checks, and injured persons.

In October, the department implemented the use of body cameras, more than a year before the state

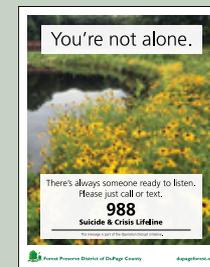


deadline. The cameras provide an ability to review officer interactions involving arrests, evidence collection, investigations, and use of force. They also provide information to develop and improve officer training, which enhances safety for both the public and the officers.

The department also purchased its first tasers in 2023. Department instructors will obtain certification in early 2024, and the entire department will receive training thereafter. The implementation will provide officers with another alternative, less-lethal weapon to use when attempting to de-escalate a use-of-force situation.



The Forest Preserve District has nine certified crisis intervention officers who receive annual training on how to help individuals who have a mental illness or are experiencing a mental health crisis. The District participated jointly with the Naperville Park District and Will County Forest Preserve District on a campaign called “Operation Disrupt,” which started in 2021. It joined the DuPage County Health Department in 2023 to promote the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline’s 988 campaign and posted signs in all visitor information kiosks in the preserves.



Improve Your Quality of Life With a Visit to a DuPage Forest Preserve

Research suggests that spending time in natural environments, such as DuPage forest preserves, can have profound positive effects on mental well-being. Time in green open spaces can reduce stress, alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression, and improve overall psychological resilience. Specifically in cases of post-traumatic stress disorder, time in nature has shown promise in diminishing the severity of symptoms and enhancing coping mechanisms. Time in nature, too, can improve memory, attention, creativity, and a person’s quality of sleep.





These five board-certified master plan projects are furthering the Forest Preserve District's mission to preserve the flora, fauna, and scenic beauty of its natural areas. The three-to-five-year projects will remove invasive woody plants, thin abundant woody native plants, augment native species, and provide follow-up management.

Egermann Woods

The 110-acre Egermann Woods is one of the few remaining pre-European-settlement oak forests in the county. It's home to a 77-acre grove that contains a Class IV mesic woodland with portions of wet-mesic woodland, wet-mesic upland forest, and vernal ponds. The grove contains 297 native plant species, including six of special concern.

In winter the Forest Preserve District selectively cleared invasive species from 6.5 acres of high-quality woodland. It treated 51.3 acres in spring with prescription burns and treated invasive species, mainly reed canary grass, over eight days during the growing season. In July it mowed approximately 5 acres to control weeds.

Fischer Woods

The 148-acre Fischer Woods is home to Dunklee's Grove, a 75-acre Class IV wet-mesic upland forest with portions of wet-mesic savanna; immature upland forest; and diverse marsh, vernal pond, and stream communities. The grove's 340 native plant species include one state-endangered, one state-threatened, and 18 of special concern.

During winter 2023 the Forest Preserve District selectively cleared 7.7 acres of high-quality woodland and 8.2 acres of second-growth woodland. It treated invasive species, mainly reed canary grass, over 11 days during the growing season.

Hickory Grove

The savanna at Hickory Grove is a 31-acre Class IV mesic woodland with portions of immature upland forest, shrub meadow, tallgrass meadow, and stream communities. It contains 243 native plant species, including three of special concern.

During winter 2023 the Forest Preserve District selectively cleared 3.5 acres of high-quality woodland. It treated invasive species, mainly reed canary grass, over two days during the growing season.

Hickory Grove's open structure and lack of dominance by aggressive nonnative species make it one of the most important woodland restoration sites in the northeastern morainal division.





Waterfall Glen

The 72 acres surrounding the youth-group campground at Waterfall Glen are just a part of the larger 773-acre Bluff Savanna, which contains 422 native plant species, including one state-threatened and 36 of special concern.

In 2023 crews removed invasive brush and nondesirable trees from approximately 35 acres surrounding the camp, controlled invasive plants throughout the summer, and dispersed native seeds across the project site.

Native wildflowers such as wild hyacinth were highly visible. Increased sunlight to the forest floor will allow species like this to thrive.



Herrick Lake

This 554-acre project site is the Forest Preserve District's largest intact block of natural areas and is dominated by Class IV, III, and II ecosystems with mesic woodland, shrub meadow, marsh, immature upland forest, tall-grass meadow and re-created prairie. So far, the District has removed invasive species and seeded and planted native plugs, trees, and shrubs on 454 acres.

In 2023 crews seeded 23 acres of former agriculture land with prairie species and overseeded additional hundreds of acres. They also removed invasive brush and nondesirable trees from approximately 117 acres. During the year the District added 12,500 plants to the area with plans to augment that with an additional 12,500 in 2024.

In 2023 the Forest Preserve District planted more than 1,000 trees, which were grown from local seeds in its native plant nursery.



Trees contribute to cleaner air. In one year a mature tree will absorb more than 48 pounds of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and release oxygen in exchange.

Thank You for Being Our Friend

Thank you to the following donors and community partners who committed their financial support through Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County or to the Forest Preserve District. Visit dupageforest.org/friends to learn more about the Friends of the Forest Preserve District, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to providing ways to help care for DuPage forest preserves.

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The Estate of Charles Johnson
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Headquarters

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Education Centers

Danada Equestrian Center
3S507 Naperville Road
Wheaton • 630-668-6012

Fullersburg Woods Nature
Education Center
3609 Spring Road
Oak Brook • 630-850-8110

Graue Mill and Museum
3800 York Road
Oak Brook • 630-850-8112

Kline Creek Farm
1N600 County Farm Road
West Chicago • 630-876-5900

Mayslake Peabody Estate
1717 W. 31st St.
Oak Brook • 630-206-9566

St. James Farm
2S541 Winfield Road
Warrenville • 630-580-7025

Willowbrook Wildlife Center
525 S. Park Blvd.
Glen Ellyn • 630-942-6200

Golf Courses

The Preserve at Oak Meadows
900 N. Wood Dale Road
Addison • 630-595-0071

Maple Meadows Golf Course
272 S. Addison Road
Wood Dale • 630-616-8424

Green Meadows Golf Course
18W201 W. 63rd St.
Westmont • 630-810-5330

Partner Sites

Bartlett Nature Center
Bartlett • 847-608-3120

Danada House
Wheaton • 630-668-5392

Fischer Farm
Bensenville • 630-766-7015

Lyman Woods Nature Center
Downers Grove • 630-963-9388



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of DuPage County**

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