

City Plans to Spend \$1.5 Million More to Fight Rats in 2024

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After eight years of being named the “rattiest city in America,” Chicago is boosting its rat abatement budget.

Mayor Brandon Johnson’s [recommended budget](#) allocates \$14.85 million to the Bureau of Rodent Control for the 2024 fiscal year. That’s about \$1.5 million more than the bureau received last year for “rodent control” services, which includes eliminating unwelcome guests through inspections and baiting of alleys and sewers, and removing dead rodents from the public way, according to budget documents.

The boost comes after [a Block Club Chicago and Illinois Answers Project investigation](#) found the city can’t keep up with rat infestations booming citywide since the pandemic.

As Chicagoans filed over 50,000 rat complaints last year, the city’s Inspector General’s office [said it would audit the bureau](#) for being ill-prepared to handle the

surge in complaints and failing to exterminate rodents efficiently.

For the last two years, the bureau failed to meet its goals to handle each rat complaint within five days, according to the investigation. Rat responses were slowest in some West and South side neighborhoods.

In a statement, a Streets and Sanitation spokesperson said the additional funding will bring on three new rat control crews — including three new vehicles and six additional staff members. The extra funding will also cover salary increases across the board for union employees who negotiated a new contract last month, the spokesperson said.

As of Friday, citywide rat complaints were down slightly through this time last year, from 40,173 rodent-related service requests in 2022 to 38,742 in 2023, the spokesperson said in a statement.

Budget documents show the bureau's full-time staff equivalents will increase from 114 to 118 people under the mayor's recommendations. But the rat-fighting bureau is still down about a quarter of its employees since 2019, when it had about 160 people working full time, city records show.

Casey Toner of the Illinois Answers Project contributed to this report.