

Dear Neighbors:

We have lived in Northfield for a long time. We love the small town feel where neighbors know each other and pull together to keep the community strong. We've always tried to make our community better and, in fact, not too long ago, John served on the Village Board of Trustees.

There has been a lot of discussion—not all of it accurate—about the 47,000 square feet of abandoned property in our Village Center. We'd like to share our perspective in support of the Northfield Village Board's efforts for you to consider, based on our experience in development, law and hospitality.

Here is why we support the plans for a Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District that can strengthen our tax base, our village infrastructure, our local revenue and our Village services.

- ▶ No amount of zoning alone will change the fact that the Village center has gone decades without investment in its infrastructure. The thought of investing in a community where you might have to pick up the tab for water main repairs, sewers, streetlights and sidewalks that could cost millions discourages investment by a grocery business, a restaurant or any other retail operation.
- ▶ Those same expenses to cover aging infrastructure are affecting the current businesses in town as well, driving up the costs for property owners and renters alike.
- ▶ A TIF is the best way to generate revenue sources to foster long term investment; invest in our infrastructure and generate new revenues for the Village and the other taxing bodies without raising taxes on our residents.
- ▶ The recent successful \$23 million District 29 referendum is raising property taxes by several hundred dollars a year for homeowners. This community supported District 29's plans to reinvest in our schools. The Village is trying to invest in itself as well, by ensuring we can grow our tax base and fix our infrastructure rather than defer those investments until the Village faces a crisis.
- ▶ If you do nothing, the overall assessed value of the village center will continue to decline, while the taxing districts that depend on property tax values continue to require funds. One way to ensure your property taxes go up is to do nothing to our village center. As the Village center's EAV continues to decline, taxpayers will make up the difference.
- ▶ Don't just take it from us. Opponents often cite the Civic Federation of Chicago's TIF Primer when they make their arguments against Northfield's plan. But this primer offers excellent arguments in favor of a TIF and how it can lead to lower property taxes:
 - *"Once a TIF district is dissolved, however, property taxpayers may benefit because the tax base of all affected governments is substantially increased. This can lead to lower tax rates and, in turn, may reduce tax bills."* "Civic Federation, Tax Increment Financing: A Primer," at page 18.

- ▶ Neighboring municipalities are highly aggressive in courting businesses to boost their tax base. For instance, as the *Chicago Tribune* reported in 2024, Glenview provided one restaurant group property and loans to open two locations. Similarly, the City of Highland Park utilizes Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to catalyze private investment and stimulate job creation. A well-known local restaurant group benefited from this directly and opened a very successful Italian restaurant in downtown Highland Park in 2023.

Seeing the former Mariano's sit dormant is not only a detriment to the quality of life in Northfield, it is also a significant missed opportunity for municipal tax revenue. While the Village cannot control private negotiations between a landlord and a tenant, it is entirely within our best interests to actively facilitate a solution and a TIF provides that opportunity. Meanwhile, the Village is losing an estimated \$350,000-a-year—now approaching \$700,000 over the past two years—from lack of tax receipts in our hollow Village core. We would ask our neighbors who oppose the TIF strategy, what Village services would you like to cut to make up for that loss?

We believe now is the time to take in the facts and to partner with our Village leadership to redevelop our town center. We urge everyone to get involved in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration. Please consider communicating your support to the Village at vgroup@northfieldil.org.

Sincerely,
Glenn Keefer & John Gregorio