

Village of Richmond

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Dear Richmond Resident:

Last week the Village Board voted to continue its cautious look into establishing a Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) for the core commercial areas along Routes 12 and 173, including downtown Richmond. A tentative TIF area has been mapped and the area qualifies for TIF status under state guidelines. The second stage in the three stage process is to now begin a draft redevelopment plan and financial analysis.

The TIF effort came, first, from the realization that our core business district is struggling and, second, from the potential for the re-development of the Hunter Country Club. Our downtown seems to be surviving but not prospering. After looking for solutions, it was apparent that TIF districts are one of the few, if not the only, tools available to Illinois municipalities to improve their core business areas.

A select few in the Village now question my motives and have employed scare tactics, with misleading information and doomsday scenarios. Their efforts are politically based and not solution based. Try not to let these tactics scare you into forming an opinion without first getting the facts. You may hear stories of isolated TIF failures, but I think Richmond is better than that.

For every failed TIF, there are hundreds of successful ones. I have employed top professionals to advise and guide us through the process. Hundreds of communities throughout Illinois, and across the nation, have successfully used TIF to enhance and return their downtown to thriving village centers without ever raising a wrecking ball. Richmond is rich in history and at the core of that history is our architecture. The goal of the Richmond redevelopment plan is not to destroy, but to enhance our buildings and streetscapes.

I envision a downtown with an attractive streetscape of new walks, old world lighting, and hanging baskets in front of the restored storefronts of existing buildings: A place where families can walk to their favorite café and visit a thriving shop. When the Richmond bypass is complete, eliminating through traffic, a vibrant downtown Richmond will continue to draw visitors with its allure and character.

I am committed to including all community stakeholders in the TIF dialogue. By law, TIF establishment is a very "public input" oriented process, and you have my word that I will go above and beyond to keep you informed and ensure that this is the right thing for Richmond. We will soon have information available on the Village web site. If you have concerns about the impact of a TIF or where we are at in the process, you can call or email me at lolson@richmond-il.com.

Let us not look back in 10 years and say "If we had only done something for the downtown when we had the chance."

Sincerely,


Lauri Olson, Village President