



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF EVANSTON THE INTERCOM

MARCH - APRIL 2010

## Assessing 25 Years of TIFs In Evanston

by Elizabeth Hayford

At the end of December, 2009, Evanston's first Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) closed. City Planning Director Dennis Marino described the TIF as a "raging success," pointing out that the Equalized Assessed Value of the tract increased from its 1985 level of \$1.8 million to \$145.5 million today. For many Evanston League of Women Voters members however, the news raised basic questions about Evanston's 25 year experience with this economic development mechanism, including:

1. What is a Tax Increment Financing District (TIF)?
2. What and where are the six Evanston TIFs?
3. Are Evanston's TIFs managed in an open and accountable manner?
4. Has the impact of Evanston TIFs been positive?

### What is a TIF?

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is an economic development incentive program authorized by the Illinois legislature in 1973 to help local governments revitalize areas that have not experienced economic growth. A Tax Increment is the difference between the amount of property tax revenue generated before the TIF district designation and that generated after development occurs. Taxing districts other than the city – schools, parks, county – continue to receive the same tax revenue as in the base year, and all the incremental revenue goes to the city for the life of the TIF, usually 23 years.

In order to be designated as a TIF district, the area must be under-



developed, abandoned or deteriorated, or be dilapidated. TIF financing allows local government to revitalize these districts, in partnership with private developers, by using TIF funding for planning, assembling contiguous pieces of property, site preparation, infrastructure improvements or job training programs. TIF Districts are supposed to be guided by the "but for" premise, that is, without city assistance, a project would not occur.

### What and Where are Evanston TIF Districts?

Evanston has created six TIF districts. The Downtown II district, created in 1985, encompasses the commercial and residential development centered at Maple Avenue and Church Street, including Century Theaters,

Optima condos, Hilton Garden Inn, and retail. It originated in a cooperative plan by the City and Northwestern to build a research park. As the market demonstrated that the research park could not succeed in its original form, a more commercial plan was developed, which include the theaters and the hotel. Public amenities in the Downtown II TIF include a parking garage, the Davis Street Transportation Center, and relocation of the Levy Senior Center.

In 1990, 1992, and 1994, three additional TIFs were created, centered on retail, or mixed retail and residential development. The Southwest TIF off Main Street was anchored by Sam's Club; the Howard-Hartrey TIF replaced an underutilized industrial site with a vibrant retail center housing Target, Jewel, Best Buy and Petco. In 1994, the vacant Washington National Headquarters on Church and Chicago was replaced with Whole Foods and The Park apartments; in 1999 this TIF district was extended to the Sherman Plaza project including housing, stores and a new downtown parking garage.

The two newer TIF districts, Howard and Ridge in 2004 and West Evanston in 2005 were actively supported by their aldermen as anchors for community improvement.

Howard and Ridge became the site of an apartment complex and a new retail complex.

The West Side District, adopted after three years of community consultation for a West Side development plan, focused on upgrading the character of the street appeal and the commercial base of the community.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through citizen education and advocacy.

The LWVE welcomes men as well as women and encourages all residents of our diverse community to participate.

*continued on page 3*

## President's Letter

In February, the Evanston league held its Local Program planning meeting at First Bank & Trust. Like local leagues throughout the country, the meeting was scheduled to decide what issues would be focused on over the upcoming year. Several members attended to discuss various topics and issues of potential interest. At the annual meeting in May we will be voting on the issues recommended by this group. This year, Betty Hayford chaired Local Program. After selecting issues of interest at the meeting, committees will be formed to investigate the topic. Research will be done, experts consulted and committee members will decide what further action is appropriate. ***This process occurs at every local league throughout the country.***

In some cases, committees will ascertain that the interest level and relevance of a specific issue do not support a public event or further action. In other cases, the committee will schedule a presentation for the general public to increase awareness of the issue. Sometimes the interest level and relevancy of the issue will encourage members to move forward on a formal local league study, which leads to league advocacy for that issue. The formal study process for local leagues is documented on the national league's website. This process is involved, even arduous. So why am I sharing, most likely boring you, with this commentary? Because in a time of anecdotal e-mails, sniping media and thirty-second sound bites, the League of Women Voters remains dedicated to educating citizens, both members and non-members alike, in a nonpartisan, informed manner. A year ago, our local programming discussion resulted in two topics to focus on this year: Tax Increment Financing in Evanston (TIFs) and homeless children in Evanston's schools. The League wanted to explore these two topics to evaluate their respective impact on our community.

The results of the League's efforts on TIFs are reflected in the lead article for this issue. After forming a committee to investigate this topic, and speaking with members of the community familiar with TIFs, it was decided that a public presentation was not warranted. However, we did feel, particularly in light of the negative press relating to Chicago TIFs, that summarizing our findings on Evanston's TIFs would be informative and helpful. Hopefully, Betty's excellent article achieves this goal.

As for the League's efforts on homeless children, the committee's work will culminate in an excellent presentation scheduled for April 28th. A panel comprised of representatives from District 65, District 202 and YOU, will discuss the situation of homeless children in Evanston. Paul Selden, Executive Director of Connections for the Homeless, will be moderator for the discussion. Several League members served on this committee including Nancy Bashook, Jessica Feldman, Betty Hayford, Carol Hirsch, Voula Moragiannis and Marge Wold. These members worked diligently to inform themselves on this issue and helped develop a presentation to inform the larger community.

Local Program is, as stated by the national League, the foundation of our advocacy efforts. It is also the vehicle through which members have the opportunity to participate in learning about local issues which interest them and at the same time, contribute to setting the League's agenda for the year. Next year I hope more members will take the opportunity to participate in the planning process. And in the meantime, enjoy the article on TIFs and the program on April 28th.

*Happy Spring to all! - Karen*



### League of Women Voters of Evanston

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Web Site: www.lwve.org

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Progressive Dinner	Ellen Browne

#### THE INTERCOM

March - April 2010 Vol. 88, No. 13

**THE INTERCOM** is the newsletter of the  
League of Women Voters® of Evanston.

# Adapting Our Gardens To Climate Change

**Saturday, April 10th - 9:00 am - 12:00 noon**

**Evanston Ecology Center** 2024 McCormick Blvd in Evanston

The plants and trees in our gardens can help reduce the impact of climate change that is projected for this area. But warming temperatures and changes in precipitation will stress many of the species now growing here. This program will explore choices of plants, trees and water management techniques that will help our gardens adapt to changing conditions.

**Speakers:** Bill Eyring from the Center for Neighborhood Technology  
Roy Diblik from Northwind Perennial Farm,  
Dr. Andrew Bell from The Chicago Botanic Garden Outreach Program

**Sponsored by:** The Forestry, Native Plants and Water Task Force/Citizens for a Greener Evanston, The Garden Club of Evanston, The Initiative for Sustainability and Energy at Northwestern (ISEN), and The Evanston Ecology Center.

**Registration:** Seating is limited. Please pre-register for this free event by calling Karen Taira, 847-448-8256. Parking is free.



## **TIFs in Evanston** *continued from p 1*

### **Are Evanston TIF Districts Managed In An Open and Accountable Manner?**

Many Evanston League members have read the Chicago press criticism of the lack of accountability in TIF developments in the City of Chicago. Conversations with city and school officials in Evanston reflect a very different situation here. Illinois law requires regular and thorough accounting of TIF expenditures and operations, and in Evanston that requirement is observed. Both school districts in Evanston have strong interest in sound TIF district management, since they forego increased tax revenue for the life of the TIF. Every December, city staff prepares annual reports on the TIFs. These reports are filed with the State of Illinois. The City of Evanston meets in public session with the school districts and other taxing bodies to present financial data and respond to questions. Reports are available on the city web site, and local journalists observe the extensive interchanges at the meetings. City council and citizen activists also keep a close eye on what happens in the TIF districts and how the TIF revenues are used.

### **Has the Impact of Evanston TIF Districts Been Positive?**

As the initial TIF was closed, the community consensus view was that TIF financing had produced generally positive development in Evanston. In the Downtown II TIF, the movie theaters, neighboring stores and restaurants, condos and the modest research park have become attractive additions to Evanston life. In other TIF districts, Whole Foods, Sam's Club, Target and Best Buy, are busy and successful additions to Evanston, providing both jobs and sales tax revenue. With the closing of the Downtown II TIF, and anticipated closing of the other three in 2013, 2015 and 2017, the TIF financed increases in tax values will produce new revenue for the schools and for the city budget, reducing some of the pressure on property tax levels.

The two newer TIF districts, Howard – Ridge and the West Side are more modest in scope and aspiration. The Howard-Ridge TIF is modest in size and includes only one apartment building. The West Evanston district has modest goals for commercial and streetscape

improvements. On the West Side in particular, the aldermen and community organizations are regularly consulted on development goals and processes.

The increase in Assessed Valuation of the initial four TIF districts is impressive. In TIF # 1, from 1985 to 2009, taxable value increased from \$1.8 million to \$145.5 million, more than 8000%. In the Southwest TIF, taxable value rose from \$1 million in 1990 to \$11.4 million today; in Howard Hartrey, values rose from \$7 million in 1992 to \$27.2 million; and in Washington National, from \$25.7 million in 1994 to \$100 million today. It is too soon to form conclusions on the two newer Districts.

### **Conclusion**

In talking with various current and past city staff and community activists, there is wide agreement that the city acted effectively and responsibly in using the TIF District framework to support development in Evanston, and used the TIF mechanism with great skill to encourage development for the benefit of the whole city. Most importantly from the perspective of the League of Women Voters, city officials have been open and responsive in explaining and defending the operations of the TIF districts. Questions have been raised since the first TIF district was created, and debated openly and sometimes fiercely in public meetings, and city officials have responded with comprehensive reports and financial data.

When the national economy revives and development projects are again proposed in Evanston, new proposals for TIF districts may appear, and they should be carefully scrutinized to evaluate their potential benefits. As time passes we will have a clearer understanding of the possible value of the emphasis on community development in the two newer districts. Evanston TIF districts have demonstrated the contribution that an active and competent city program of economic development can make, but any such city actions need oversight by an active and engaged group of citizens asking questions, reading reports, and attending public meetings. The League's regular observation of city council and key city committee meetings provides a valuable model for this oversight.

## Lunch & Learn: Features Cook County Juvenile Detention Center Administrator

Earl Dunlap, the Transitional Administrator for the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center ("JTDC"), is the featured speaker at the next Lunch & Learn with the League of Women Voters of Cook County on Wednesday, March 24. This fundraising luncheon will be held from 11:30 to 1 pm at the DePaul Club room on the 11th floor of the DePaul University Center, 1 E. Jackson, on the corner of Jackson and State Street, in downtown Chicago. The fee is \$30 and includes a box lunch.

In the wake of lawsuits filed by the American Civil Liberties Union and others about the deplorable conditions at the JTDC, a federal judge appointed Mr. Dunlap to oversee the center. Since taking charge in 2007, Mr. Dunlap has made a number of changes in both staffing and overall organization at the center—not without controversy. Once the court finds sufficient progress has been made, it is expected that the JTDC will return to oversight by the County. However, as a result of state legislation that has been passed, the Chief Judge, rather than the Cook County Board President, will oversee the center.

Come find out what has been happening at the JTDC, what else Mr. Dunlap would like to see happen at the JTDC, and when he expects to be able to step down.

Register on-line at :[www.cookcounty.il.lwvnet.org](http://www.cookcounty.il.lwvnet.org)  
Questions? Call Betty Rosenblum at 847-498-0350.

## Dickens Revisited: Homeless Children In Evanston

On April 28, LWVE and the PTA Council will sponsor a panel entitled "Dickens Revisited? Homeless Children in Evanston," starting at 11:45 am, at the North Shore Retirement Hotel, 1611 Chicago Avenue, Evanston. Expert panelists will define the current situation of homeless children nationally, in the Chicago area, and in Evanston. They will outline ongoing efforts to support these children, and challenge the audience to consider what further efforts are needed in the community, and how individuals can assist them.

The panel will be moderated by Paul Selden, Executive Director of Evanston's Connections for the Homeless, and will include Joyce Bartz, Homeless Liaison Staff for District 65, Tom Bookler, Homeless Liaison for the North Suburban Cook County Regional Office of Education, and Don Baker, Executive Director of Youth Organizations Umbrella (YOU). They will explain how the State of Illinois and other government bodies define homeless children, how the schools and others support these children, and the greatest unmet needs.

The luncheon meeting is open to the public and includes lunch for a cost of \$15. Reservations should be made at the League office by calling 847-866-7844. Any questions can be left at the same number.

## Calendar of Events

All programs are free unless otherwise noted. For more information, call 847-866-7844 or visit Calendar updates at [www.lwve.org](http://www.lwve.org)

### Wednesday, March 24 Lunch & Learn featuring the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center Administrator

Sponsored by The League of Women Voters of Cook County.  
See article this page for details.

### Saturday, April 10 LWV of Evanston Progressive Dinner

Please reserve this evening for an evening of great food, great conversation and good will! *Proceeds from evening support local league.* See article this page for details.

### Wednesday, April 28: Luncheon Meeting Dickens Revisited? – Homeless Children In Evanston

Lunch served 11:45 am | Panel begins 12:20 pm  
North Shore Retirement Hotel, 1611 Chicago Ave, Evanston  
See article this page for details.

The meeting is open to the public and includes lunch for a cost of \$15. Reservations: 847-866-7844.

### Thursday, May 13 LWV of Evanston Annual Meeting

King Home, 1555 Oak Avenue, Evanston  
Details to follow.

While not mandatory, RSVP's help us plan. Please call us at 847-866-7844 to reserve your spot for upcoming presentations.

## Progressive Dinner Saturday, April 10

*A biennial event for fun and funds to support the League's local endeavors.*

Enjoy an evening of good conversation AND good food – hosted by League members in their homes, so all proceeds support League programs.

### 6:00 pm Reception & hors d'oeuvres

at Westminster Place Assembly Hall, 3200 Grant Street in Evanston

**7:30 - 9:00 pm Main Course** at assigned locations

**9:30 - 10:30 pm Dessert** at assigned location

\$50 per person. Reservations due March 26

Invitations were mailed several weeks ago. If you didn't receive yours, or need more information, call Katy Pendleton at 847-328-1936.



**Film Tells the Forgotten Story of 1908 Springfield Race Riot** – by Mary Morris

Evanston LWW member Geri Sizemore presented the film "Springfield Has No Shame" on Wednesday, February 10 at the North Shore Retirement Hotel to members and guests. The film was produced by the NAACP in conjunction with its 100th anniversary in 2009.

Using newspaper clippings, photographs and quotes from the time, the film documents a race riot that occurred over two days in August 1908 – a story that has largely been suppressed. The Illinois governor had to call in the National Guard to restore order. Seven died and of that number two African Americans were lynched. Hundreds were wounded, 2,000 African Americans fled the city. Businesses were torched and 40 black homes were burned, as was a Jewish-owned business.

Springfield citizens had different reac-

tions to the riot. One was denial and another was to blame the victims, noting that blacks were too successful. This cruel and senseless riot took place in the capital of Illinois, where President Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator, had been laid to rest.

The savage riot made national news and the consequences of it as well as lynchings in other states country prompted the formation of a committee of African Americans, whites and Jews that created the National Association for the Advancement of Colored people, a civil rights organization that is open to all.

After the film showing a conversation took place about race relations today, the vigilance of the NAACP regarding civil rights violations, and what is happening in Evanston. League members are invited to join the NAACP and attend meetings at the Evanston North Shore Branch at 1229 Emerson Street, Evanston. Member dues are \$30.

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**Cook County LWV Annual Meeting:  
Progress on Patronage Reform** – by Betty Hayford

The Cook County League of Women Voters Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, May 17, 9:30 am-1 pm in the Discovery Center, Brookfield Zoo. As in years past the business meeting will be followed by a program and lunch. The program this year will feature a panel discussion with the three Cook County Shakman Compliance Administrators. The Compliance Administrators are court appointed individuals with the charge of monitoring hiring practices within Cook County government to ensure compliance with the Consent Decrees stemming from a 1969 lawsuit that challenged hiring practices based on political considerations – in other words, political patronage.

- The three compliance officers will discuss the questions:
- What Do They Do?                      • Why Do They Do It?
  - What Have They Found?              • What Will Happen Next?

Panel includes Mary Robinson, Compliance Administrator for Cook County; Clifford Meacham, Compliance Administrator for the Cook County Sheriff's Office; and Jan Carlson, Compliance Administrator for Cook County Forest Preserve District. All were appointed in 2008 or 2009.

For more information visit the following websites: [www.countyshakman.com](http://www.countyshakman.com), [www.sheriffshakman.com](http://www.sheriffshakman.com), [www.cookfshakman.com](http://www.cookfshakman.com)

All LWV members in Cook County are welcome at the Annual Meeting. Further information about the meeting including information for delegates and registration information will be forthcoming in April.

**Lake Michigan League of Women Voters (LMLWV)** – by Elizabeth Kinney

This organization was previously called Lake Michigan Interleague Organization. Its membership includes all local and state Leagues of Women Voters in the Lake Michigan Water Basin which includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin.

The program of LMLWV is based upon the Natural Resources positions of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) as they relate to environmental issues affecting the Lake Michigan basin and surrounding states. It is committed to the preservation and protection of Lake Michigan and the other Great Lakes. Annually, it participates in the Healing Our Waters Coalition's Great Lakes Day in Washington, D.C. The HOW Coalition includes representatives from all of the eight Great Lakes states. On Great Lakes Day, members meet with most of the Great Lakes Congressional delegations about issues concerning the Great Lakes. The most recent such meeting was in February of this year.

While the LMLWV sometimes requests permission from LWVUS to take positions on pending legislation, most of its work is focused on education of League members and the public on the problems of Lake Michigan and the Great Lakes, such as invasive species and water quality. It has developed a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "What the League Can Do To Protect the Great Lakes," which has been shown to many Leagues in the four state area. Additional information on LMLWV, including state reports, can be found on its website: [www.lmlwv.org](http://www.lmlwv.org). Additionally, LMLWV conducts an annual meeting every year in October in one of the four states on a rotating basis. All League members are invited to attend.

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# Membership News by Susan Black

## Check Your Directory Listing

The updating of the LWVE membership directory is in full swing! Here's an opportunity to check your current listing in the directory to make sure it is accurate.

It is important that our directory has correct, up-to-date information in light of our policy to not publish personal address and phone information in *The Intercom*. This is to protect members' privacy, since *The Intercom* is online.

Personal information of members is recorded in the database by Janet Kittlaus when members join or renew. Diane Korling is now converting the database to the directory and wants to be sure your information is correct.

Here's where **you** can help. Take a moment and look through the

directory for your listing. Is it up-to-date? Did you notice a friend who's in the directory who has moved and we might not know their new address?

Please send your corrections or other observations directly to Diane Korling (her contact information is in the directory) and if you need further assistance, contact the LWVE office at 847-866-7844.

## PAYPAL: Make It Easy to Pay Your Dues

Have you renewed your membership in the Evanston League? It's never been easier to renew, now that Paypal is alive and kicking on the LWVE website. Please visit the membership page and renew your membership today!

[www.lwve.org/membership.php](http://www.lwve.org/membership.php)

## Do you know someone who might be considering membership in the Evanston League?

Prospective members can join on-line or you can email contact information to [lwvevanston@att.net](mailto:lwvevanston@att.net) and we will follow up with them.

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