



THE LAND USE BULLETIN

TIF *Tax Increment Financing*

Tax Increment Financing has been in Iowa for decades. It started as an urban renewal law to eliminate slum and blight in deteriorated areas. Initially, the law was very effective. However, in 1985 during the farm crisis, the Iowa legislature changed the law, to add economic development as a general

Building a million dollar house is not going to create a rich person.

purpose for the bill. The law was later expanded to include housing as well as business development of various types.

TIF allows a special district to be set up whereby a majority of the tax revenue

from new development stays right within in the district to support further development or to pay off bonds. This is an excellent way to concentrate resources on a depressed area that really needs revitalization. The down side is less money is available to cover expenses elsewhere in city budgets. Worse, counties, cities, and school districts are denied the portions of the revenue they normally would receive in tax funding

from that new development.

While counties have little recourse, the state is obligated to reimburse a majority of the tax funds to the school districts, a requirement that shifts the financial tax burden to every taxpayer in Iowa. Currently, the State of Iowa is losing \$45 million per year from the General Fund to reimburse school districts for local tax dollars lost to TIF.

The purpose of TIF is to increase and enrich the tax base through job growth, population retention, earnings gains or trade enhancement. But according to a 2002 Iowa State University Dept. of Economics study by David Swenson, TIF spending at the county level had NOT yielded important fiscal, economic nor social outcomes.

From 1989–1999, Iowa estimated non-farm job growth at about 320,000 jobs, although during that same period only 50,000 more people moved to Iowa. Rural counties obtained about 45% of the new-job gains while adding only 12% of the new people. This means that more rural people were working two jobs, a factor which translates not to economic development, but to declining economic health.

Swenson’s now dated study,

finished in 2002, showed TIF spending per year amounted to \$3,807 per new non-farm job. In rural communities the current level of TIF spending annually (*yes, each year*) divided by the expected increase in population for the year was \$20,158 per person. Relative to job and population gains the cost of TIF activities in the state appeared to be very high. No method of evaluating TIF districts to see if they are executing the intended goals of the program exists. There is no accountability for this tax shift.

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1000 Friends of Iowa

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*The mission of 1000 Friends of Iowa
is to promote
responsible development that:*

*conserves and protects our
agricultural and natural resources*

*revitalizes our
neighborhoods, towns and cities*

*improves the quality of life
for future generations*

FROM OUR NEW BOARD PRESIDENT

by Mary Ellen Miller



I grew up on a classic small farm during the 1940s in the Amish community near Kalona, IA, where we grew most of our own food and sold milk, cream, eggs, chickens, pork and beef locally. As a 4-Her in the 50s I learned about (then) new farming practices to help preserve our precious topsoil: terracing, rotating row crops, building grassy watersheds, and leaving hilly ground for hay and pasture. After college I became an educator and researcher in human epidemiology at the University of Iowa. In the 1970s I purchased a small farm in Washington County, Iowa, and for twenty years raised organic, grass and corn fed, free-range, Angus beef. It is with this background that I will serve as board president.

Today, I watch with pride and enthusiasm the revival of sustainable agricultural in Iowa as people rediscover the satisfaction and value of growing and eating locally while protecting the land from the abuses of the past.

Let there be no doubt, the mission of 1000 Friends is to preserve and protect farmland and revitalize our cities and towns requires a lot of public education and activism. This is no easy task we have entered into; but after a decade of effort we have a better grasp of the territory and the issues. Changing land use practices takes time and perseverance. We need to appreciate the land as a non-renewable resource, to look at it as a perishable asset, to see blighted inner cities as growth opportunities, and to recognize how individual life decisions impact our land. Toward these ends, 1000 Friends recognizes that just being “anti” does not solve the problem; we must offer alternatives and solutions, develop partnerships and working relationships, and advocate and educate within the existing system to make desired changes.

Education and advocacy are our primary tools to achieve healthy changes in land use. We offer smart growth education for public officials, sustainability information for farmers and conservation options for landowners. We have a Legal Defense Fund to help empower citizens fighting inappropriate land use plans. All this work requires many volunteers and lots of dollars to get the word out; we need to reach nearly 3 million Iowans with our message.

I invite you to join us in this effort and recruit your family and neighbors to join us. Get involved and attend decision making meetings (planning and zoning, MPO, school board, city council, soil and water commission, county supervisors, economic development, REAP, DNR, etc.); “you gotta know the territory.” Let us know about your local issues, successes and failures, so we can use our website to inform others. We build on this knowledge; each experience will move us closer to our goal of smart growth and mindful land use planning.

In service,
Mary Ellen Miller

LINDAS LINE

by Linda Gobberdiel

Dear Friends,

I am honored to be writing to you as your new Executive Director! I will be started in my position on a regular, part time basis on Monday, August 10. I need to learn more about our members and issues and will be in touch in a variety of formats to get your input. I would appreciate you sharing your thoughts with me, as I will be more effective if our members are actively engaged and contributing to our mission.

So, how did I come to this position with 1000 Friend of Iowa? I am currently a founding member of the Iowa Food Cooperative and serve on the Board of Directors. I learned about the open director position from members of the coop board. I have worked with non-profit organizations throughout my working career, both in staff positions as well as leadership positions. I chose to pursue working with 1000 Friends of Iowa as I can personally identify with several of their underlying principles throughout my life.

I was born and raised during the 60's in the suburbs of St. Louis, Missouri. Even though I technically lived in suburban sprawl, I loved the green space that we had outside our back door to explore and enjoy. Being physically active and in nature is a part of who I am, so issues surrounding community living and quality of life are very important to me.

When I married, my husband and I purchased a home built in 1911, in a neighborhood in the city of St. Louis, that has now achieved historic neighborhood status. We became actively involved in renovation and community development throughout our time there. I became very inspired by the work that we could accomplish as a cohesive group working toward common goals to keep our neighborhood prospering and to enjoy the cultural diversity the city had to offer.

I studied nutrition as an undergraduate as I was always curious about the relationship of food to our own health. My graduate degree in management is in line with my enjoyment in managing people and programs. One area I am particularly excited about is the growing interest and support for local farms and products. This brought me to my involvement in the start up of the Iowa Food Cooperative (www.iowafood.org), which I see as having positive effects on the manner in which Iowans look at how we use our land. In my new work with 1000 Friends of Iowa, I plan to collaborate with more organizations having similar priorities.

What we eat is the most personal way of supporting a sustainable land use system in Iowa. A system where the farmer is making a fair living, the community members are given food security, the food is not traveling 1200-1800 miles to arrive at our homes, and we are incorporating more sustainable practices that ultimately save our soil, water, and air resources. In the August 2nd issue of The New York Times Magazine, I read a disturbing quote by Harry Balzer, market researcher, who wrote "...80% of the cost of food eaten in the home goes to someone other than the farmer, which is to say to industrial cooking and packaging and marketing". Our lifestyle has moved us from whole, fresh foods to convenience, potentially at the expense of our health and certainly our quality of life. Educating individuals on the advantages of more locally grown foods and cooking again is a start. Reconnecting our food to the source can lead to a renewed appreciation for Iowa's productive farmland and a rejuvenated effort to protect it.

I look forward to working with you!

Linda Gobberdiel, R.D. L.D.

Executive Director, 1000 Friends of Iowa

Being physically active and in nature is a part of who I am.

Tax Increment Financing

continued from page 1

Again, if TIF were being used strictly to enhance a town's struggling Main Street or to redevelop blighted inner city neighborhoods, tax payers should have no complaints. Unfortunately, over the years TIF became an engine for sprawl. Without oversight and restraints, the current majority of beneficiaries of TIF ignore struggling Main Streets and blighted inner city neighborhoods and ultimately, schools throughout the state.

TIF, as it is now being used for upscale housing, superstores, corporate estates, airports, industrial parks on farmland, and hundreds of other dubious projects, weakens the state in the name of progress. This process not only is not genuine, in the long run, it is deadly.

Jordan Creek, West Des Moines newest mall, received \$60 million in TIF money. It has since siphoned business from long-established retail centers, which now have applied for and qualified to become a TIF district also.

Clearly, it is time for our Iowa legislature to realize the folly of this law. They need to boldly reform TIF laws and stop the hemorrhaging from the General Fund. Building a million dollar house, it isn't going to create a rich person. The Iowa Legislature needs to restore sanity to a law that now makes a mockery of its original purpose. Sensible reform will relieve property taxes for most residential payers and also restore significant tax revenue to the General Fund of the Iowa.

There Went the Neighborhood (right after the school was closed)

Many Iowans can talk about the lessons learned on the way to school. Children often experience their first independent journey walking to school. They learn tiny civics lessons about being a good neighbor; whose lawn to avoid and whose you can cut through. The morning walk wakes them up and gets them ready to sit quietly and learn. An important part of America, the small school you could walk to, in a neighborhood where you knew your neighbors, is disappearing. It is being replaced by mega-school sprawl — giant educational facilities in remote, middle-of-nowhere locations that no child can walk to.

1000 Friends members, attending our annual meeting in Iowa City, heard first-hand about situations across Iowa. In Des Moines, Iowa City, and Ames concerned citizens told of handsome, solid, centrally located school buildings accessible by bicycles and on foot, which had been closed in older neighborhoods. Oftentimes, the closures were closely followed with a bond issue for a new school. Increasingly, a stressful drive through congested traffic separates children and parents from more distant schools. Currently, only one of eight children walks or bikes to school. Acres of asphalt are replacing close-knit walkable neighborhoods as the typical school setting. We also learned of The Cotton Report which shows conclusive evidence that larger schools do not produce better students.

However, one success story stood out in which the Dubuque School District and the City of Dubuque cooperated to rebuild an existing elementary school where the old school stood. Acreage requirements received special consideration and the beautiful old entranceway to the original building was salvaged and used inside the NEW school.

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For additional information on schools and sprawl read

“Why Johnny Can't Walk to School”

at www.preservationnation.org/issues/historic-schools/additional-resources/schools_why_johnny_1.pdf.

DO YOU HAVE AN IDEA FOR A STORY?

Is something happening in your area you'd like others to know about?

Is there a local event pertaining to land use you would like to publicize for free?

The Land Use Bulletin is available for any of our members to write or suggest articles, announcements, or photos.

We welcome all submissions but cannot guarantee publication.

Email crystal.letto@1000friendsofiowa.org or call 515-288-5364.

1000 Friends of Iowa keeps our members informed through our electronic *Public Policy Updates, Action Alerts* and occasionally news from the office. If you've changed your e-mail address or want to be sure you are on our listserv, please contact Crystal Leto at crystal.letto@1000friendsofiowa.org, or call 515-288-5364.

REAP Assemblies Begin September 21

Mark your calendar now for regional Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) assemblies that begin September 21.

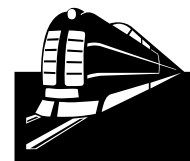
The assemblies are open public meetings and all REAP programs and associated projects are discussed. Also, opportunities for regional REAP projects are identified at these meetings and participants may recommend changes to REAP policies, programs, and funding. These 17 regional assemblies are held every two years.

Recommendations are then discussed by delegates at the REAP Congress the following July. Five delegates are elected at each of the 17 assemblies to serve on the statewide Congress. The responsibilities of the congress are to organize, discuss, and make recommendations to the Governor, state legislature, and state agencies. REAP is funded from the state's Environment First Fund (Iowa gaming receipts) and from the sale of the natural resource license plate. The program is authorized to receive \$20 million per year until 2021, but the state legislature sets the amount of REAP funding every year. This year REAP was appropriated \$18 million. When you add license plate and interest income, its total budget is about \$19 million.

Learn more about the REAP fund allocation formula, programs and county REAP committees by visiting <http://www.iowadnr.gov/reap/files/reapchairs.pdf>

County REAP committee chairs are identified at http://www.iowadnr.gov/reap/files/09_rassemblies.pdf

Inter-City Passenger Rail May Come to Iowa



Nine Midwestern states are proposing an expansion of Amtrak's Inter-city rail service with Chicago as a main hub. Amtrak has completed feasibility studies for service between Chicago and the Quad Cities, the Quad Cities to Iowa City, and from Chicago to Dubuque. The Iowa Department of Transportation has also requested a study for extending the service from Iowa City to Des Moines.

It is anticipated that trains would make two round trips a day between Iowa City and Chicago via the Quad Cities. The Chicago to Iowa City route might be up and running in just a few years. Passenger trains would travel at speeds up to 79 miles per hour once rail lines, crossings, and stations have been upgraded.

Governor Culver recently took a "whistle-stop" tour from Iowa City to Chicago to meet with other governors at the Midwest High Speed Rail Summit. The governors have pledged to work together to make the rail service a reality, citing their commitment to reducing road congestion and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

Another EPA Committee on Clean Water Act — Mississippi River Basin

The EPA has established yet another National Academy of Science committee to provide advice to the agency on "strategic priorities and alternatives for specific actions regarding Clean Water Act implementation across the Mississippi River basin."

These other parties will include other federal agencies, state governments, U.S. congressional staff, farmers and agricultural organizations, municipalities, environmental groups, and the private sector.

Over the next two years, the committee will convene a series of workshops that will feature expert guest speakers and dialogue with the committee regarding water quality and nutrient control activities and alternatives across the Mississippi River basin. The committee will identify pros, cons and prospects of strategic priorities and alternative actions under the Clean Water Act to help achieve both water quality

improvements across the river basin and into the northern Gulf of Mexico. The committee also will provide advice to enhance research and knowledge regarding various nutrient control actions and outcomes.

The committee is chaired by Dr. David H. Moreau of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and includes: Dr. Otto Doering, Purdue University economist; Tracy Mehan, former EPA assistant administrator; Dr. Nancy Rabalais of the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium; and Roger Wolfe of the Iowa Soybean Association.

*Roger Wolfe of the
Iowa Soybean Association
will help study water
quality improvements
across the river basin.*

1000 Friends of Iowa 11th Annual Meeting

Over 50 members and supporters of 1000 Friends attended this year's annual meeting in Iowa City. Attendees had an opportunity to enjoy the local farmers market and learn more about recognizing and supporting sustainability from the day's speakers, presentations, and panel.



Above and right: One of many reasons for the success of the pedestrian mall is the variety of activities available for all ages.



Left: Bicycles are a popular means of transportation in Iowa City.



Below: Annual meeting participants toured the Iowa City downtown pedestrian mall.



Above: Iowa City was recently named a City of Literature by UNESCO, one of only three designated as such in the world. Bronze plaques, embedded in downtown sidewalks, honor 49 authors associated with Iowa.



Above: The Ties that Bind, by Jane DeDecker, National Sculptors Guild, Iowa City Public Art Program



Left: 1000 Friends of Iowa members and supporters on a walking tour of Iowa City led by board member, Karen Howard.



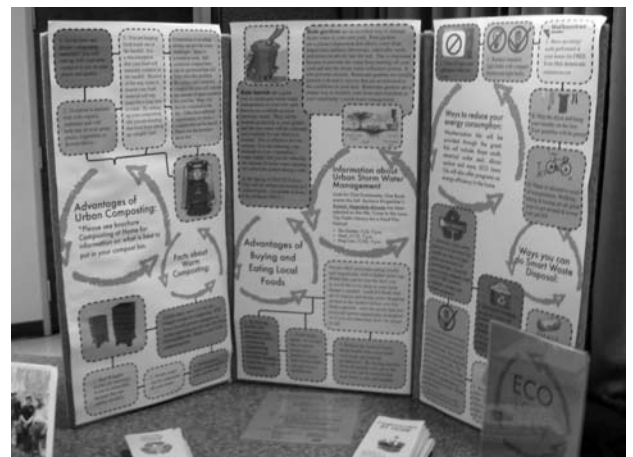
Above right: 1000 Friends' members listen to Linda Barnes, EDA Program Coordinator and Associate Professor of Biology, Marshalltown Community College and co-owner of High Hopes Gardens, explain the benefits of supporting local food systems in Iowa.

Top right: Attendees listen to Brad Neumann, Johnson County Council of Governments as he discusses expanding passenger rail in Iowa.

Above left: Board member Ery Klaas introduces representatives from Iowa City, Ames, Des Moines and Dubuque who discussed local efforts to preserve and protect neighborhood schools.

Far left: David Putz talks about the local effort to save and preserve a neighborhood school in Ames."

Left: Shearon Elderkin discusses an EPC procedural ruling and the effect it will have on the public's ability to comment."



Above/above right: Learn more about the Johnson County Heritage Trust at <http://www.jcjt.org/> Find ECO Iowa City at <http://www.icpl.org/eco-iowa-city/>



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The Iowa DOT Invites Public Input

The Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) recently hosted public input meetings across the state, and is inviting input from Iowans concerning the Statewide Public Transportation Study.

This is your big chance to tell lawmakers to change the incentives. By responding to the online survey and making your voice heard, we can tell them collectively that Iowans want to reduce their reliance on the automobile by using a reliable transit system with dependable services.

Using information gathered at the public meetings, the online survey and other sources, the Iowa DOT will finalize the study and submit the report making recommendations to the Legislature on December 1, 2009.

The Iowa DOT is seeking input on:

- *Baseline level of service for public transportation in Iowa*
- *Gap analysis between baseline service and public transportation demands of Iowans.*
- *Transportation services needed to close these gaps.*
- *The additional cost of these services.*
- *Addressing Iowa's energy conservation goals.*
- *The range of possible funding concepts to address service needs.*
- *Draft findings of the study to date.*

Make your opinion known by completing the survey at
www.iRIDE21.com.