

PRESERVE HOMER

The Official Newsletter of the Committee for the Preservation of Homer Township
A Standing Committee of the Homer Township Board
(708-301-0522 or (815) 838-1200

Volume 1 Issue 4

September, 1998 Page 1

SPECIAL OPEN SPACE ISSUE

WHERE ARE WE?

ELECTED OFFICIALS OF HOMER TOWNSHIP

Ronald Svava
Supervisor
Andrew Fazio
Trustee
Gregory Fisch
Trustee
Terrence Healy
Trustee
Russ Petrizzo
Trustee
Ethel Rodriguez
Town Clerk
Kevin Murray
Assessor
Debra Ristucci
Tax Collector
Frank Dunn
Hwy. Commissioner

On April 8, 1997, at the Annual Township Meeting, the electors passed a resolution which instructed the Homer Town Board to establish and fund a committee to seek ways and means to block the loudly announced intent by the City of Lockport to annex massively into Homer Township and also prevent similar efforts by any other municipality. That Committee has been established and is known as THE COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE HOMER TOWNSHIP. Ron Svava is Chairman and Ben Entwisle is the Co-Chairman.

Ben Entwisle
Editor

Homer Township is a 36 square mile (6 mile x 6 mile) area which currently has a population of about 29,000. Township parks, at 70 acres, constitute less than 3 out of every 1000 acres. In the south central part, along Spring Creek, the Will County Forest Preserve has acquired extensive holdings. Most of the township residents are located in the north northeast-eastern part of the township. Much of the west-central-south-southwest is made up of relatively large tracts, and most of this is farmed. Farmland is also open space. We need to encourage the farmer to stay and farm.

The Village of New Lenox has annexed more than 200 acres of Section 32 (south central). The city of Lockport has annexed areas known as Broken Arrow, Deer Path Run, Whispering Pines, the Fields, Westwood Estates, Saddlewood Run and Carron Springs, which total 900 to 1000 acres, more or less. The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority has purchased parcels totaling approximately 900 to 1000 acres which effectively chops the township into two parts. In the southeast corner of 167th Street and Gougar Road, ISTHA has permitted the city of Lockport to annex two parcels of the right-of-way. As of the writing of this article, construction of I-355 from I-55 to I-80 is being held up by the Federal courts. This issue will be heard by a Federal Appeals court on September 28, 1998.

Pressures for accelerated development of our township are increasing. Observe the catastrophically high rates of new construction in Plainfield and Lemont. To fall on these people in the near future will be large tax increases to fund numerous new schools, new road construction, new sewers, and other infrastructure. All of their existing service capabilities will be inadequate for their now larger populations. These communities, as their residents knew them will be changed forever by the additional traffic congestion, crowded living and all of the problems which come with rapid exploitive growth. All too often bigger is definitely not better. Yet, there is no way to "undo" this ill advised rapid growth and return to former circumstances.

The Village of New Lenox has, to date, been only mildly interested in expanding into Homer Township. But, recently they indicated an interest in six of our southern sections. This is 1/6 of our entire township! The city of Lockport has boldly announced their intent to expand massively into Homer Township and is doing so. In June of 1998 Lockport annexed five more parcels which are in the vicinity of Gougar Rd. and 167th Street.

Under Illinois statutes, the rights and prerogatives of a township are distinctly inferior to those of an incorporated community such as a village or city. A township has few effective ways it can defend itself from a predatory municipality. Clearly, what Homer Township has done to defend its territory in past years has not been adequate. It is self evident that if Homer Township continues in the future, the same methods it has employed in the past, that we will have a markedly degraded township. Our future and our lifestyle will be dictated by others whose only interest is to squeeze tax money from Homer Township and to satisfy their egotistic desire to expand their boundaries.

Thus, we face threats of annexation from adjacent municipalities. We need to rapidly expand township owned/controlled open space while land is readily available at current prices. We need to find and utilize all legal means to control zoning and development in our township. We must find ways to determine our own lifestyle and quality of life.

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HOW DID WE ARRIVE WHERE WE ARE?

Twelve or fifteen years ago Homer Township's population was less than 10,000 and no part had been annexed to any municipality. Since then many individuals and families have purchased land and built homes. Numerous subdivisions have been constructed.

In most areas, the Homer Township Board of Trustees has tried to keep the individual per residence lot size at one acre or greater. In some localities which are adjacent to smaller lots it has been necessary to make concessions and allow smaller lot sizes through a transition area to larger lot sizes. The effort to keep single family residential lot sizes in the one acre size or larger has eased the burden placed on our schools and taxpayers. It has also indirectly contributed to the ability of the city of Lockport to annex into Homer Township.

Under Illinois statutes municipalities are provided with many incentives to expand in area, in tax base, and in population. For example, all land and improvements (anything added to the land such as buildings) are income producers via a municipal real estate tax. All Illinois municipalities receive a part of any sales tax and gasoline tax, plus approximately \$95.00/year per person from the State of Illinois. Many possible fees and minor taxes also provide revenue. In Illinois, municipalities are grasping creatures which never gain enough money to satisfy their wants. Their ability to spend always exceeds available revenue. Developers are businessmen, and like all businessmen, are motivated by the desire to achieve a maximum profit. A developer can be expected to do no more than his minimum requirements. To maximize profits, a developer needs to "add to the land" as much in the way of "improvements" as possible. Thus, developers favor higher density because this increases their profit for any given development.

A municipality such as Lockport favors higher densities because this provides them with a larger EAV (equalized assessed valuation) to tax.

To enable higher density, city water and city sewer are needed. Thus city sewer and water make high density possible and high density makes city water and sewer a necessity.

To expand into Homer Township a municipality must annex rural properties which are contiguous (adjacent) to the boundaries of the municipality. This almost always requires that the owner of the property in question agree to the annexation. Why would he/she do so? Answer: the municipality endeavors to convince the landowner that only via annexation and rezoning can he/she receive the best price for this land. Meanwhile, the municipality is busy recruiting developers, trying to find one who will purchase and develop the property. For Lockport to expand, the landowner must be persuaded to accept the notion that dense development of his land, by a developer, will bring him (the landowner) the highest price. This is not necessarily so. He can probably sell at a higher price if he sells 1, 1.5, or even 2.5 acre lots.

Once the landowner buys into the pitch from the developer and the city of Lockport, the landowner has been "convinced" that he has only one good way to go; i.e., annex to the municipality, rezone and sell to the developer. The landowner then proceeds to annex, rezone, sell, and move somewhere else. Homer Township has been degraded, the municipality has expanded, and our future is less promising and less secure.

Question: Did the landowner receive the "best" price for his/her land? Answer: An excellent case can be made to show the landowner **DID NOT** receive the best price for his land. However, the developer got what he wanted and the city of Lockport officials got what they wanted. At any given time a developer is considering and

comparing various properties. The cost of a property is only a cost and in that sense is comparable to any other cost a developer may incur.

As a businessman, the developer tries to keep all his costs as small as possible. Thus he pays no more for a tract of land than he has to pay.

From the available tracts, each having a price, the developer considers what "improvements" he can add to each and then decides which tract is most attractive to him. If he could do so, he would buy the land for \$1.00/acre. He is willing to pay only MARKET PRICE. Thus, despite all the *HOOPLA*, the landowner receives no more than MARKET PRICE.

Homer Township currently has, and has had, no effective way to counteract or block the actions of an aggressive municipality. We need to find ways and means of doing so. The **OPEN SPACE PLAN** is one important step towards regaining control of our future. It is absolutely necessary that our referendum for **OPEN SPACE** pass on November 3, 1998. Remember, under the Illinois statutes - townships have very limited powers and authority. **OPEN SPACE** will strengthen Homer Township. That is why the city of Lockport opposes it.

Since the pressure to develop will increase with the passage of time, Homer Township must find ways to control growth intelligently. **REMEMBER, IT WILL COST THE TAXPAYER 4 TO 5 TIMES AS MUCH IF THE LAND IS DEVELOPED AS COMPARED TO BUYING AND HOLDING THE SAME LAND AS OPEN SPACE. WE PAY EITHER WAY.** However, we pay far less for **OPEN SPACE** which will give us a future with a better quality of live and enhanced real estate values.



VOTE S.O.S.

SAVE OPEN SPACE

WHAT CHOICES DO WE HAVE?

Have you ever watched a nature program on the Discovery Channel? Observe how a herd of antelope, zebra or gazelle react to the attack of a predator. It is a mad scramble with each animal concerned about only itself. At first all are in a panic. Then, when the predator has its victim, all the others relax. They may even resume grazing within sight of the feeding predator. Sometimes people behave like antelope. They ignore or tolerate a predator so long as they (themselves) are not the victim. How different it would be if the antelope, as a large group, attacked the predator.

I raise this point because Homer Township is 6 miles across. Will the majority in eastern Homer Township ignore the tragedy of western Homer Township? I hope not. The possibilities of success are much enhanced if we will see ourselves as ONE PEOPLE and work together as ONE. Forget where you live in Homer Township. Forget being a republican, democrat or something else. Forget religious differentiation, income differences, incorporation or any other divisive issue. Let us stand together and face down the predator.

In Homer Township there is a change in landscape and atmosphere in each quadrant and section. There is suburban, semi-rural, rural, agricultural and forested areas. There is a variety of larger and smaller subdivisions, providing a diverse and interesting community. But, what affects one part of our township, for example our western part, will also have consequences for people living every where else within Homer Township. The reasons we moved to Homer Township can and will disappear if annexation of our land continues. For example, Lockport's dense residential housing would force the construction of new schools, new and wider roads, new sewers and other infrastructures - all of which is at the expense of the taxpayer.

What are our choices?

1) We can do nothing. We can be like the antelope herd that doesn't even bother to run. We can watch in a disinterested manner as the predator pulls down one after another of our neighbors -- until, one day it becomes our turn to be the victim.

To do nothing means the future which could have been ours will be lost - and lost by default.

To do nothing means eventually we will be paying city taxes, but not to OUR city.

To do nothing means our school taxes will increase again and again.

To do nothing means a large additional tax burden to pay for the new streets, sewers, water lines, schools, government buildings, and equipment that will come with municipal high density development. A recent study, based on data and information received from School Districts 92 and 205 (Ludwig-Reed-Walsh and Lockport Township High School), shows that on average 1.375 new grade school students are added to school enrollment with each new single family residence. Translating this into the cost of land, buildings and equipment each new single family residence imposes a new cost of \$18,563.00 on the grade school district and \$15,211.00 on the high school district. The total cost is \$33,774.00 per single family residence and this is very good reason to slow and limit growth. With this kind of growth, the developer and the city win, but taxpayers pay and pay and lose.

To do nothing means we lose our quality of life and control of our future.

2) We (Homer Township) can continue to do what it has been doing.

This is almost as unsatisfactory as (1), above. At least our township is doing something, but clearly what has been done and is being done is not adequate to the task. Otherwise we would not continue to

lose properties to adjacent municipalities

3) We can find the ways and means to defend ourselves. This appears to be our best chance to succeed. The OPEN SPACE PLAN is the first significant step in this direction. It is important for every citizen to become familiar with Homer Township's problems and opportunities.

**PLAN TO VOTE "YES" ON
NOVEMBER 3, 1998 FOR
THE OPEN SPACE PLAN.
VOTE "YES" FOR YOUR
FUTURE AND THE
FUTURE OF HOMER
TOWNSHIP.**



HOW WILL "OPEN SPACE" BENEFIT HOMER'S RESIDENTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS?

Remember, in Illinois, townships are severely restricted in terms of what they can and cannot do. Municipalities, by comparison, have a relatively free hand. Homer Township needs ways and means to regain control. OPEN SPACE will provide numerous ways to strengthen our control. OPEN SPACE enables:

- 1) the township to purchase land which can be used for a number of different purposes, such as (a) the maintenance or conservation of natural or scenic resources, (b) protect natural streams or water supplies, (c) promote conservation of soils,

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How will "Open Space" Benefit.....

wetlands and shores, (d) afford or enhance public outdoor opportunities, (e) provide flora and fauna, historic sites or other areas of educational or scientific interest, (f) enhance the value of abutting or neighboring highways, parks or other public lands to the public, (g) implement the plan of development adopted by the Planning Commission of our township, and (h) promote orderly urban or suburban development.

When the **OPEN SPACE PLAN** is approved, we then will have an **OPEN SPACE PROGRAM** which enables our township to acquire various degrees of interest in selected real estate ranging from full ownership to any lesser right or interest. Yes, some land will be used for township owned parks, some for athletic activities, and some for nature preserves. There can be pedestrian walkways, bicycle and equestrian trails, park benches, mowed green lawns, shade trees and undisturbed natural areas.

All localities are not best suited to park status. Some tracts acquired under the **OPEN SPACE PROGRAM** may logically be used for residential or commercial purposes. Our township can, at any time, release (sell) parcels which will then be used for the intended purposes. The monies from the sale can be used to purchase other real estate. Thus an **OPEN SPACE PROGRAM** will significantly increase the ability of Homer Township to control land use and development



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q. What will the **OPEN SPACE PROGRAM** cost?

A. The proposed \$8,000,000.00 bond issue, at an interest rate of 5.5% paid off over 20 years will initially result in a tax rate of about \$0.1207/\$100.00 EAV. Due to the inflation and on going development, the EAV of Homer Township can be expected to increase by about 3% per year. This will reduce the expected tax rate accordingly because our tax base will be expanding. The estimated cost to property owners is shown in the following table:

MARKET VALUE	TAX		
	1st Year	Halfway	Last Year
\$150,000.00	\$ 60.32	\$ 44.48	\$32.80
180,000.00	72.39	53.38	39.37
210,000.00	84.46	62.28	45.93
240,000.00	96.52	71.18	52.49
270,000.00	108.59	80.08	59.05
300,000.00	120.65	88.97	65.61

Homer Administration
Offices
14350 W. 151st Street
Lockport, IL 60441

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Permit No. 218
Lockport, IL 60441

POSTAL CUSTOMER

SPECIAL OPEN SPACE ISSUE

Q. What will it cost Homer Township if the **OPEN SPACE PLAN** does not pass?

A. The experience in Libertyville Township (Lake County, IL) shows full development cost of land will be 4 to 5 times the cost of **OPEN SPACE** purchase. Development will congest and degrade the area.

THERE IS NO WAY TO AVOID PAYING SOMETHING.

Q. Why do we need it?

A. As things stand, our township has little or no control over how our land is developed. **OPEN SPACE** gives us a significant degree of control.

- REMEMBER -

YOUR VOTE COUNTS
VOTE 'YES' FOR OPEN SPACE
ON
NOVEMBER 3, 1998

FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULES

Location: Homer Town Hall, 16057 So. Cedar Road

Homer Town Board (7:00 PM):
Business Meeting: October 5, November 2 & December 2
Planning Meeting: October 7, November 4 & December 7
Homer Planning Commission (7:30 PM):
October 14 & 28, November 11 & 18, December 9 & 16
Committee to Preserve Homer Township (7:30 PM):
September 29, October 29, and November 30

MORE REASONS TO SAVE OPEN SPACE

PROMOTES ORDERLY AND CONTROLLED URBAN /SUBURBAN GROWTH

OFFSETS THE EFFECTS OF RAPID GROWTH

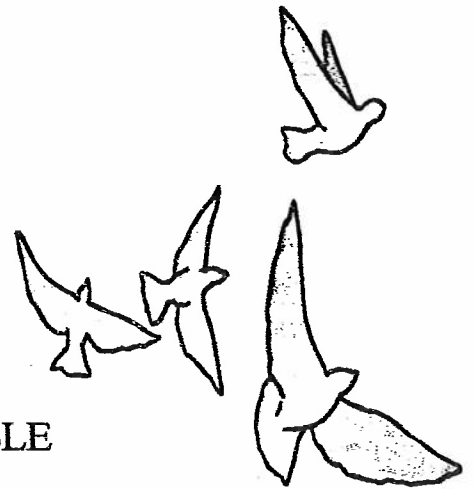
REQUIRES LESS SCHOOLS TO BE BUILT

LESS TRAFFIC AND CONGESTION

PRESERVES LAND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

PRESERVES AGRICULTURAL LAND WHERE POSSIBLE

PROTECTS NATURAL STREAMS AND WATER SUPPLY



PRESERVES THE COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF LIFE

PROMOTES CONSERVATION OF SOILS, WET LANDS, WILDLIFE, HISTORIC SITES, FLORA & FAUNA

PROVIDES LAND FOR RECREATION, SUCH AS BIKE/HIKE TRAILS, PICNIC GROVES, SPORTS FIELDS AND COMMUNITY FUNCTIONS

**WHEN THE BOND IS RETIRED, THE TAX IS ELIMINATED
UNLIKE PERMANENT TAXES BY SPECIAL TAXING DISTRICTS**

VOTE YES TO
SAVE OPEN SPACE

VOTE
YES

SAVE OPEN SPACE

NOV.
3rd

PRESERVE NATURAL AREAS NOW, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

You will pay either way, so the choice is yours! Buying open space will cost you much less in tax dollars than if the land were developed. Remember, cows and critters don't send children to schools.

*APPROXIMATE COST IF REFERENDUM PASSES (YES)

<u>Home Value</u>	<u>For 1st Year</u>	<u>For 15th Year</u>	<u>Yearly Average</u>
\$150,000	\$60	\$33	\$47
\$180,000	\$72	\$40	\$56
\$210,000	\$84	\$46	\$65
\$240,000	\$96	\$52	\$74
\$270,000	\$108	\$59	\$84
\$300,000	\$120	\$66	\$93

VOTE YES

Typical developments, cost 4 to 5 times more in taxes than open space.

Although Lockport's Land Use Map for Homer Township shows 2.5 single family homes per acre, they have recently agreed to 3.6 units per acre. If municipalities zone and develop land as multifamily, these numbers could easily double or triple. The City of Lockport encourages high density to insure an increase in their tax revenue. All Homer taxpayers will pay for new elementary & junior high school services because these Lockport developments bring students to school districts 92 & 33C. Only the Lockport taxpayers who live in Homer Township are effected and not Lockport taxpayers as a whole.

**APPROXIMATE COST IF REFERENDUM FAILS (NO)

<u>Home Value</u>	<u>For 1st Year</u>	<u>For 15th Year</u>	<u>Yearly Average</u>
\$150,000	\$269	\$309	\$289
\$180,000	\$322	\$370	\$346
\$210,000	\$376	\$432	\$404
\$240,000	\$430	\$494	\$462
\$270,000	\$484	\$556	\$520
\$300,000	\$538	\$618	\$578

* The real estate tax and tax rate required to repay the bond is dependent on five variables, therefore the exact rate will not be know until the bonds are ready for sale or have been sold. If any of these variables, (interest rate, repayment period, amount borrowed, EVA, future EAV increases) change, the tax also changes. The tables above, in the newsletter, and in other flyers are intended as guidelines.

**This is an example of the tax increase due to the cost of building and operating ONE (1) new grade school of approximately 800 students.

NOV.
3rd

VOTE
YES