

Open Letter to the Officials of the Village of Orland Park
From Cook County Commissioner Elizabeth "Liz" Doody Gorman

For some time, the Mayor and Trustees of Orland Park have been proposing a "Downtown" Orland Park development plan. A cornerstone of this plan is to be a Luxury Apartment / commercial complex to be built adjacent to the Metra Train Station at 143rd Street. As these plans are now being finalized, it has come to light that contrary to what was previously assumed to be a private - public partnership, is in fact a plan where the village will be financing 95 percent of this project through its bonding authority.

Now you will face a monumental decision that impacts all of the taxpayers in the community. It should be an easy decision to make if village officials make as their priority protecting the best interests of those taxpayers.

There are many questions that must be answered. And given the village's push for full transparency, providing the answers to these questions to the public should be simple.

For example, is it in the best interests of the taxpayers to double Orland Park's debt in order to finance construction of the proposed luxury apartment / commercial complex? I'm certain there would be local taxpaying developers that would love the opportunity to put up \$1,000,000 and have the village finance the remaining \$65,000,000 coupled with the \$45,000,000 that has already been spent on this project.

Making the assumption that the sales tax will remain constant is a reckless risk. We know that Gov. Quinn is seeking to rollback sales taxes returns to the municipalities in order to bail out our deeply debt-burdened state. Mayor McLaughlin is keenly aware of the risks of relying on sales taxes to repay the debt because he attended a press conference at which local mayors plead with the Governor not to reduce sales tax returns to local governments. If Gov. Quinn gets his way, you will be putting every Orland Park property owner in serious peril.

Increasing debt has its consequences. Look what happened to the nation's bond rating in the wake of the recent public debate about increasing the debt. Is it wise to risk all this for a speculative venture?

Who is going to pay that type of rent, \$1,500-\$2,000? Young professionals, who the village is targeting, will choose Lincoln Park or the South Loop without the travel time or expense. Orland Park has a growing inventory of vacant retail space and rental property. Only a handful of the units at The Park Station at 153rd Street Metra Station (behind Colette Highlands) have been purchased, where an empty foundation lies.

More importantly, we just had a village-wide election in which all of these issues could have been brought to the public for discussion and debate. Instead, these plans were held back until after the election as if to avoid public discussion.

Orland Park should not rush in to this venture. The financing and the debt it will bring needs to be examined more closely. It has taken years to get to this point and now the village officials want to fast-track this? It doesn't sound right.

It is my understanding that the Village will be hosting an "open house" regarding this development on August 29, 2011 at the civic center. Holding a meeting the week before Labor Day with a planned vote the day after Labor Day is simply not enough. Most people are busy getting their kids back to school and

focusing on the holiday. I would hope village leaders would schedule several public hearings in September with a final vote on the issue in October. Don't muzzle the taxpayers on this issue. Please hear us out.

Respectfully,



Elizabeth Gorman

Orland Park Resident &

Cook County Commissioner