

Vegetables are a must on a diet.
I suggest carrot cake, zucchini bread,
and pumpkin pie.

—Jim Davis

SKYLINE

AN INSIDE PUBLICATIONS NEWSPAPER

FREE

Volume 110, Number 35
773-465-9700

NEWS OF THE LOOP, STREETERVILLE, RIVER NORTH, NEAR NORTH, GOLD COAST & OLD TOWN

August 27-September 2, 2014
insideonline.com

Son's Death Births Anti-Gun Strategy



ANN GERBER

THE INSANITY OF THE POWER OF THE GUN LOBBY leaves concerned citizens fearful of hearing the news, reading the papers, watching TV. How many more must die before the tide is turned?

ONE OF THE NATION'S HOPES is centered in a sensible, strong, tough top anti-gun violence group right here in Chicago.

THE NATIONAL GUN VICTIMS Action Council (NGVAC) was founded by Elliot Fineman after the senseless shooting death of his son, **Michael Fineman** on Dec. 30, 2006. He was murdered by a mentally ill man who was not legally allowed to purchase a gun, yet was able to do so legally because of holes in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System database. Michael was killed while eating dinner with his wife in a restaurant.

THIS VICTIMS ACTION COUNCIL ADVOCATES using economic leverage to force corporate America to do the right thing -- outlaw guns in public places, and condemn gun violence the way they did second-hand smoke. This is the group behind the original Starbucks' action that got the coffee giant to "unwelcome guns." Chipotle, Target, Chili's, followed.

THEIR TRUTHS INCLUDE "We can have sane gun laws now," "30,000 men, women and children die from gun violence every year," "1993 is the last time the federal government passed any gun legislation." They are reminding everyone that we don't need another Columbine or Newtown and that conceal and carry is now legal in 50 states.

ALL THAT IS NECESSARY for a gun epidemic to triumph is for corporate America to stay on the sidelines and do nothing.

HOW CAN YOU HELP? Stand with the estimated 100 million Americans who want sane gun laws. Withhold financial support from corporations, services, groups and states that do not support sane gun laws and tell them it is time for a change. Use your buying power to effect change. The NRA has an annual budget of \$250 million to lobby and dictate gun laws. Make a donation to NGVAC. Contact info@gunvictimsaction.org.

YOU CAN MAIL A CONTRIBUTION to National Gun

ANN GERBER see p. 2



167 W. Erie

Two new high-rises approved by city Gino's East on the way out

The Chicago Plan Commission has approved two new River North high-rise projects. The projects are located at 720 N. LaSalle St. and 167 W. Erie St. Both are being developed by Magellan Development Group LLC.

The LaSalle St. high-rise is a 382' tall, 298 dwelling unit building with commercial uses on the ground floor, 109 concealed parking stalls and an 8,000 square foot pocket park at the corner of Wells and Superior streets. The entire structure will be clad in masonry.

Approvals for these giant structures came after months of negotiation with impacted stakeholders, in coordination and partnership with the River North Residents Assoc. Out of those meetings came requests for

HIGH-RISE see p. 15

The wrath of Khan

Taxpayers deserve transparency and accountability
says city watchdog

BY PETER VON BUOL

Hired as the Chicago City Council's first inspector general in 2011, Faisal Khan brought a wealth of experience to his new position. From 2008-2011, he had been an inspector general with New York City's department of investigations and earlier, from 2001 until 2008 he had been an assistant district attorney in Queen's County, New York, where he had investigated and tried numerous felony and misdemeanor criminal cases.

Ironically, his past experiences of investigating and prosecuting crime and corruption in the nation's largest city did not quite prepare him for Chicago, a city which in three decades has had 32 aldermen convicted of crimes. Because the office of the legislative inspector general was a newly-created position, there simply was no data available.

"At the time I was hired, I was told there would really not be a lot of investigations. I was given the impression there would only be a



Chicago City Council's first inspector general, Faisal Khan.

few cases at a time. Then, when I started my appointment, the calls started right away. We had that many people willing to file sworn complaints on the first day," Khan said.

According to Khan, the calls have never stopped. To him, the reason is obvious. Until his office was created, there had never been

KHAN see p. 13

Millions in TIF property tax money moving around the city City had \$1.71 billion in TIF property taxes on hand Jan. 1

BY NICK D. NOUGH
Special to Inside

A review of the 2013 annual reports of the City's 151 Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts by volunteers with the TIF Illumination Project, based on statistics released by the Cook County Clerk's office, revealed some interesting facts about Chicago's finances and how TIF funds are moved around the city.

sider blighted.

Some local tax and good government activists have referred to TIFs as a slush fund controlled by the mayor with spending based on priorities and criteria that are a closely held secret.

Others feel that TIFs are just widely misunderstood and that the large sums they generate have made them easy targets for tax hungry special interests and citizens who would like to see more

controls put on spending TIF funds.

Funds are generated by growth in the Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) of properties within a designated district over a 23-year period. The total TIF extraction for 2013 was \$412 million, a decrease from the 2012 take of \$37.3 million or 8.3%. This is the amount of property taxes extracted by Chicago's TIF districts and diverted from local units of government that rely on property taxes for their operation. Those taxing bodies are then forced to divide their individual budgets into ever smaller pots of tax payers to make up the lost revenue, making TIFs a defacto property tax increase.

For instance, 56% of Chicago property taxes

are supposed to go to the Chicago Public Schools. When portions of those taxes are syphoned off for TIF districts, those folks outside of TIF districts must make up the difference.

Most recently on the North Side a \$18.4 million modernization project at Swedish Covenant Hospital, 2739 W. Foster, in Lincoln Square is being supported with \$4.6 million in TIF funds under a plan approved July 30 by City Council.

The work will include \$10.4 million in emergency room upgrades and \$8 million for construction of the Mayora Rosenberg Women's Health Center within the hospital's Galter Medical Pavilion, 5140 N. California Ave.

The emergency room work will involve improvements to 27 trauma and examinations rooms, the pharmacy, nurse's station, waiting area and mechanical systems. The project will be completed by Spring 2016.

TIF see p. 19

Hundreds of millions of property tax dollars continue to move around the city, from one TIF district into another and sometimes to the city's General Fund. On the North Side some of those transfers include:

Transfers In:
Hollywood/Sheridan - \$3,997,000
Devon/Sheridan - \$3,136,000
Lawrence/Kedzie - \$2,500,000
Near North - \$2,500,000
Western Ave. North - \$2,000,000
Western/Touhy - \$1,680,289
Lincoln Ave. - \$749,998
Devon/Western - \$550,000

Transfers Out:
Clark/Ridge - \$3,136,000
Lawrence/Broadway - \$2,872,000
North Branch South - \$2,500,000
Clark/Montrose - \$2,000,000
Devon/Western - \$1,680,289
Addison North - \$1,354,000
Bryn Mawr/Broadway - \$1,125,000
Western Ave North - \$749,998

TIF from p. 1

The women's health center will involve the creation of facilities for female patients and an all-female medical staff. The 16,800-square-foot project is expected to be completed later this year.

Other well-publicized TIF projects include \$17 million to expand the Walter Payton College Prep High School in Old Town and \$55 million to build hotels and a DePaul University-anchored 10,000-seat arena near McCormick Place.

City wide, 21 TIFs now take at least 90% of all property taxes collected inside their borders, but most of them are not located on the North Side. On the North Side the Lincoln/Belmont/Ashland TIF stands alone, taking in 95% [\$1.128 million] of the taxes collected within its' boundaries.

The top 10 TIFs collected a total of \$203.3 million in property taxes in 2013. The top grossing TIF in the city is the Near South, which collected \$61 million in 2013, representing 92% of total property taxes collected inside that district.

The top three producing TIFs on the North Side are LaSalle/Central in the Loop at \$21.5 million; Chicago/Kingsbury at \$18.5 million, and Near North at \$17 million.

City wide total TIF expenditures equaled \$386 million (a increase from 2012 of \$83.2 million, or 25%). This is how much all of Chicago's TIF districts spent in 2013.

The total fund balance as of Jan. 1, 2014, is approximately \$1.708 billion, an increase of 1.7%, of which \$1.5 billion is committed to projects through 2017.

One of the lessor known TIF tactics of

***Other well-publicized
TIF projects include
\$17 million to expand the
Walter Payton College Prep
High School in Old Town and
\$55 million to build hotels
and a DePaul University-
anchored 10,000-seat arena
near McCormick Place.***

City Hall and the Mayor's Office is the exportation of TIF funds out of one area and into another. Total revenues transferred into TIFs from other TIFs are almost \$137 million.

Total revenues transferred out of TIFs is nearly \$145 million – leaving \$8.1 million unaccounted for.

[The city's Dept. of Planning and Development extracted \$7,558,864 for staffing costs from 91 TIFs.]

On the North Side the three largest exporters of TIF funds are Clark/Ridge in Edgewater with a loss of \$3.1 million; Lawrence/Broadway in Uptown with a loss of \$2.9 million, and North Branch South, located along the river east of the Kennedy within the West Town, Near North and Lincoln Park communities, at \$2.5 million.

The three biggest winners on the North Side were Hollywood/Sheridan in Edgewater picking up an extra \$4 million; Devon/Sheridan raking in that \$3.1 million lost by property owners in the Clark/Ridge TIF district, and Near North taking in \$2.5 million.