

3. What is your position on future development in Salem Lakes, including Tax Increment Districts (TIDs), zoning decisions, and land-use planning?

Dennis Faber's Response

Future Development in Salem Lakes, Including Tax Increment Districts

Since the 1980s, when sewer service was installed, residential development took off - and the developer, not the Town at the time, paid for the infrastructure. In fact, another requirement in our 2035 Smart Growth Plan was to have the developer also provide water and then dedicate the water system to the Town, now Village.

One particularly important thing to consider is that when the developer pays for the infrastructure, those costs are added to the selling price of the home. The perceived difference in allowing the developer to use Tax Increment Financing - or letting the property tax dollars generated from the development pay for the infrastructure - is that those costs are not in the home's price, so the selling price is supposed to be more affordable.

Within the next two years, the Village Board is going to make a major decision regarding a new development that may cause the creation of a Tax Incremental Financing District (TID). This residential development TID is nothing like the TID created to develop the Salem Business Park the Town created in 2015. The Village taxpayers would be responsible to satisfy that debt if the real estate taxes were not sufficient to pay back the loan that matures in 2035.

With the residential TID currently proposed, the developer — not the Village — will be solely responsible for the infrastructure debt if the real estate tax does not pay off the debt. However, the Village is entitled to a portion of the annual real estate tax throughout the life of the TID, but there are restrictions on what that money can be spent on. The percentage the Village would get and what it can be spent on have yet to be determined.

As you can see, there is a lot to analyze before the Village Board makes a decision. I have suggested that our Planning and Zoning Committee, along with our Economic Development Committee, work together and arrive at recommendations they will give to the Village Board.

Zoning Decisions

Our Planning and Zoning Committee is charged with thoroughly questioning a petitioner who wants to change their property's zoning before making a recommendation to the Village Board. I like to sit in some of their meetings to better understand the request.

One recent change that has been approved, but still needs refinement - is allowing the use of Planned Unit Developments, or PUDs. PUDs allow for lessening a variety of our building codes. My concern is setting precedents that may cause future conflicts.

Land-Use Planning

Wisconsin law mandates that each municipality update their 2035 Smart Growth Plan. The Town of Salem spent a considerable amount of money, time, and effort producing their 2035 plan. Our Planning and Zoning Committee, with SEWRPC consultants, is updating our state-mandated 2050 plan, considering current growth and perceived future development scenarios.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of our Smart Growth Planning. There are 13 elements in this planning:

1. Introduction and Village Background
2. Existing Plans and Ordinances
3. Population, Household, and Employment Trends and Projections
4. Issues and Opportunities
5. Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources
6. Land Use
7. Housing
8. Transportation
9. Utilities and Community Facilities
10. Economic Development
11. Intergovernmental Cooperation
12. Implementation
13. Summary

I believe our Smart Growth Plan should be required reading for newly elected officials, and especially for every member of our Planning and Zoning Board. By doing so, they will understand that our planned growth has been thoughtfully developed by professional planners, engineers, and - most importantly - the public. Our original plan has 13 neighborhoods, and numerous public hearings were held where property owners voiced their opinions and helped develop those plans. Our new 2050 update also mandates public input, and one public hearing has already been held.

Steve Dunn's Response

Realistically, I don't think development can be stopped, but it can be slowed down and pursued thoughtfully. We need to focus on smart, strategic growth.

TIDs can be beneficial in helping our area gain needed infrastructure, but they need to be properly negotiated to benefit the community and not just enrich the developer.

I know many in the community are worried about big box stores coming to our Village. I don't think they are a good fit for our community, nor necessary considering our proximity to Burlington, Lake Geneva, Antioch, and Kenosha. Land-use planning can be challenging because we are trying to anticipate future needs, and sometimes projections are incorrect. Part of smart development is making sure the land-use plan is evolving with the community's needs and desires. Many in our community don't want to lose the rural charm of seeing the farm fields. On the flip side, we need to balance that with the desire of some owners of those farm fields to sell their property, even if the buyer may not want to use it for agriculture any longer.

There needs to be a place for businesses - trucking, construction, accountant, manufacturer, whatever - that want to come to this community. If they are willing to make the investment, we need to make the process as simple and straightforward as possible.

Salem Lakes has traditionally been a blue-collar community. We also need to find ways for those who want to live or move here to have access to housing, whether that's a studio apartment or a 10,000-square-foot mansion. With smart planning, there can be a place for everyone to live, work, and play.

Adam Miller's Response

Development is necessary for our future, but it must be done smartly. Decisions about TIDs, zoning, and land use should prioritize what is best for the Village, not what is most convenient for builders. Residents should have the first voice in these decisions, not just the Board or Village Hall.

Kerry Verenski's Response

I support thoughtful, controlled development. I believe in preserving the small, rural character residents value while planning responsibly for the future. This includes negotiating TIDs carefully, making prudent zoning decisions, and prioritizing landscape planning that protects our natural environment and community feel.

James Woodke's Response

I hope to represent the Village residents; the Village Board's goals should be what the Village residents want.

The Village Board has tools like TIDs, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Economic Development Commission to assist them in making their goals come to fruition.

TIDs are somewhat complex. The developer makes a proposal to the Village Board, and then it's the Village Board's job to make sure the terms are agreeable.