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TIF District Transforms Brickyards into Economic Engine.

How Deerfield transformed old brickyards into an economic engine

Little did Deerfield officials know nearly 30 years ago their desire to see development over old brick yards would turn the village into a major north suburban employment center.

Since the establishment of a TIF (tax increment financing) district to spur development along Lake Cook Road heading from Waukegan Road into Riverwoods a number of Fortune 500 companies have made the area home bringing thousands of people into town each workday.

"There's no way to know how many employees there are but my guess is our daytime population is more than double our residential population," Deerfield Bannockburn Riverwoods Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Vickie Street said.

With Walgreens corporate headquarters employing 4,200 people as of the end of last year and Baxter International, Inc.'s home office another 4,000, according to Deerfield's 2013 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), Street may be conservative in her estimate.

The village's top 10 employers in terms of number of workers bring 14,705 people into town each day, according to the CAFR report. Deerfield's current population is 18,240, giving credence to Street's estimate.

Deerfield has 5 million square feet of office space in its Lake Cook Road corridor, according to Principal Planner Jeff Ryckaert. That does not include 1.23 million square feet of office space next door in Riverwoods where Discover Financial Services' corporate headquarters employ 3,898 people, according to Riverwoods Director of Community Services Rob Durning.

"It (the Lake Cook corridor) includes everything on Lake Cook Road (west to the village limits) and the Parkway North Center," Ryckaert said. Parkway North is just south of Deerfield Road near Riverwoods Road.

None of this development was an accident. Much of the area was old, shuttered brick yards, according to Mayor Harriet Rosenthal. She was a member of the Plan Commission when the idea for the TIF was first hatched. She was elected to her first of six terms as a trustee before it was passed. She was first elected mayor in 2009.

"The Lake Cook corridor was our first TIF district," Rosenthal said. "(Former Mayor) Bernie Forrest told the (Village) Board to do some grand planning. The whole area was built on the old brick yards. There was no tax revenue then."

Besides Walgreens, Baxter and Discover, Deerfield and Riverwoods are home to Takeda Pharmaceuticals, Mondelez International, Astella Technologies and Jim Beam Brands. Mondelez, the newest Fortune 500 company to arrive, markets snack foods like Oreo cookies.

Deerfield's development has grown hand in hand with the businesses that call it home. Walgreens

has been in the village for some time. It likes what the area provides its employees like the central location.

“Deerfield and Northbrook are wonderful communities and highly desirable places to live and commute for many people. Because our headquarters has been located here for many years, many employees live in homes selected for ease of getting to work.” The company houses some of its corporate workers in Northbrook.

Just as Walgreens credits its long established presence in Deerfield as a benefit, Mondelez likes the fact it was able to build its new space from scratch when Northfield based Kraft Foods decided to split its snack food business from its groceries. Mondelez markets the snack foods.

“Our headquarters in Deerfield is meant to convey our new company dream and instill a new culture of collaboration and creativity,” Mondelez spokesperson Richard Buino said. “The new space is intended to reflect the collaborative and innovative spirit that we’d like to encourage in the new company.”

Just as Deerfield’s proximity to major surface and public transportation hubs makes it attractive to businesses, the value of those workers coming to town each day returns benefits to the community.

“The employees shop here on their lunch hour or on their way home,” Street said. “They might have their dry cleaning done nearby or pick up dinner on the way home. I call them business residents.”

Besides the proximity to transportation hubs, Takeda likes having other health care related resources nearby.

“Deerfield is a good location for the biopharmaceutical sector because of its proximity to Chicago and Milwaukee with an existing network of health care providers, researchers and a healthy biopharmaceutical sector,” Takeda Senior Manager for Corporate Giving and Communications said.

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