

# Letters to the editor

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Woodridge Reporter

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## **Board member explains District 99 land stance**

The village of Woodridge is suing Downers Grove High School District 99 in a legal effort to seize District 99's 44-acre parcel of land in Woodridge.

On Sept. 14 Woodridge offered District 99 \$10 million for our 44 acres. District 99 rejected this offer and refused to sell.

Here's why:

District 99's 44-acre parcel of land in Woodridge helps solve a crucial need. North High and South High are each short of land. Although the State Board of Education has recognized North should be on at least 53 acres and South should be on at least 63 acres, North is actually on 18 acres while South is on 44 acres.

For competitive, comprehensive high schools with our facilities and over 5,000 students, more land is essential. For comparison, the new high schools in Plainfield, Oswego and Neuqua Valley in Naperville are each on 80 to 100 acres.

To help address our land shortage, District 99 in 2000 began a small land acquisition effort just west of North High. So far we have purchased five of eight needed lots. The cost has been \$1 million per acre.

That is the replacement cost of our 44-acre parcel of land in Woodridge — \$1 million per acre or \$44 million for the whole parcel. The Woodridge offer of \$10 million for our 44 acres is \$34 million short of our current replacement cost.

When we are already short of land, we would reduce District 99's land holdings by over 40 percent. In an effort to reverse this land loss with large alternative land acquisitions near both high schools, we would needlessly impose upon the taxpayers a tax burden of millions of dollars in replacement costs and would unnecessarily force the disruption of neighborhoods which have been established for decades.

District 99 does not want to take those actions. So District 99 is defending this litigation at great cost — making budget balancing even more difficult though still achievable.

We would much rather spend our resources on books, computers and needed capital repairs rather than attorney's fees and costs. But we are being sued. We are not suing the village of Woodridge.

District 99 is defending our schools, our students, our taxpayers, our residents and our larger community. That is our obligation. We must maintain the educational opportunities we can provide, both now and in the future.

Some candidates for the District 99 School Board side with Woodridge in its desire to seize the 44 acres. The incumbent candidates do not and are helping stop Woodridge from seizing District 99's 44-acre parcel of land. On April 17, District 99's voters will have their say and decide.

**Craig Greenwood**

**District 99 School Board member**