

# Home Rule – You Decide – Know the Facts

**When you are asked to vote on ceasing Home Rule, VOTE NO !**

A <u>NO</u> VOTE =	Self Governance Lower Property Taxes A Safer Village Non-Resident Revenue Sources Creative, More Responsive Government
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**FACT:** Home Rule authority allows the Village of Downers Grove to govern itself. <sup>(1)</sup>

Our village should decide its own fate... not Wheaton, Springfield or Washington.

In 1970, the State of Illinois granted Home Rule status to municipalities with a population of 25,000 or more. This authority allows for local government to pass ordinance on a variety of matters unless a State statute prohibits it. Conversely, Non-Home Rule communities may only pass ordinances specifically allowed by State statute.

As an example, if Downers Grove wanted to pass an ordinance requiring contractors to pay an additional "Tear Down Tax" it could only do so if it was a Home Rule community. If we were a Non-Home Rule community, we would have to petition Springfield for this specific authority.

Home Rule authority allows Downers Grove to decide issues unique to our village.

Home Rule allows municipalities to find local solutions to local problems. One of the main advantages of Home Rule authority is that it enables grass roots problem solving.

Since many issues are germane to a particular community and local residents know their community best, Home Rule allows local authorities to be more flexible and responsive to their constituents.

**FACT:** Home Rule does not increase overall taxation levels. <sup>(2, 5)</sup>

Many people will try to paint a picture that bears the tag line, "... if they can tax, they will..." You may even have been told by a petitioner that the main reason to revoke Home Rule is to lower taxes. Not only is this wrong, statistical study of the issue has proven there is no correlation between Home Rule status and resident tax burden.

In 1999, the citizens of Rolling Meadows defeated a referendum to eliminate Home Rule by a 93% to 7% vote. After the election, a study was done of the specifics in Rolling Meadows as well as data from 103 of the 153 Home Rule municipalities in Illinois. Here are the findings...

a.) Property Tax revenue is a slightly smaller proportion of own source revenue in Home Rule communities meaning in Home Rule communities, the authority to tax is usually used to remove revenue burden from property taxes – Home Rule allows us to keep property taxes low – proven by our tax levels as compared to other communities.

b.) Own source revenue is a slightly smaller proportion of total revenue in Home Rule communities meaning when we have the authority to tax, we use this authority to generate revenue from sources outside the Village – a good thing for our citizens.

In each case, the differences between Home Rule and Non-Home Rule communities were statistically insignificant. The data show that Home Rule authority is not a significant determinant in a community's taxation level.

Home Rule has managed to spread tax burdens among a larger number of different taxes and, thereby, it has reduced local reliance on property taxes.

**FACT:** Home Rule authority provides for a safer village. <sup>(1, 2)</sup>

Non-Home Rule communities are allowed to register businesses, not to license them.

Our Home Rule status allows Downers Grove to license businesses – from electricians to liquor stores. When businesses are licensed, the citizens of Downers Grove through its Boards, Commissions and Village Council can set standards for and insist upon both quality and safety. Licenses as opposed to registrations can be revoked.

Home Rule authority can also allow for broader regulation of large rental complexes.

These simple tools assist the Village in monitoring overcrowding, property maintenance and illegal room conversions.

It is this authority that was used recently when fines for the sale of alcohol to minors by Liquor License holders was increased. It is Home Rule authority that we use when we work to prevent underage drinking and DUI's.

Home Rule helps keep us safe.

**FACT: Home Rule provides a method of generating revenue from non-residents leading to lower property taxes.** (2, 4, 6)

As a result of the flexibility granted Home Rule units for dealing with local issues in creative and innovative ways, Home Rule governments become less dependant on property taxes by shifting dependence to other revenue sources such as sales tax, impact or license fees, special assessments and hotel/motel taxes.

Unlike property and utility taxes, Home Rule authority taxes (such as sales tax) may be applied to a variety of purchases. Home Rule authority allows the Village to capture revenue from the multitude of visitors who eat in our restaurants, visit our hotels or shop here. Visitors to Heritage Fest, the Bike Race, the Ice Sculpture Festival or any of our other many attractions are welcome – but they do create additional traffic, retail crimes and police calls.

Recouping tax revenue from non-residents to pay for additional police service and wear and tear on our roads is an equitable way to reduce the burden on the local taxpayer.

**FACT: Downers Grove is not alone.** (3, 4)

Downers Grove became a Home Rule community as a result of the 1970 Illinois Constitution re-write. For over 30 years, we have successfully operated as a Home Rule community. In DuPage County, more than half (19 of 36) of the communities are Home Rule. There are 153 home rule municipalities in Illinois including...

Arlington Heights	Barrington Hills	Elmhurst
Glen Ellyn	Glenview	Naperville
Oak Brook Terrace	Oak Park	Palatine
St. Charles	Warrenville	Wheaton
Wilmette	Woodridge	

If there is a problem in this Village now, after 30 years, perhaps it's due to the people running our Village – not the authority bestowed upon them.

Vote smart: don't just react to flamboyant, self-serving rhetoric and scare tactics by a few residents unhappy with recent changes.

**FACT: Home Rule prompts creative government.** (4, 5)

The following are just some examples of how Home Rule governments addressed unique, local concerns:

- Controlling nuisances, such as non-legitimate massage parlors
- Solving social problems such as juvenile vandalism
- Creation of license programs and fees for sidewalk food vendors
- Regulation of the removal of unsafe or abandoned buildings
- Creation of a landlord-tenants council
- Construction and operation of hydro-electric generating plants
- Expanded borrowing power to reconstruction water treatment facilities
- Aid in economic development by improving infrastructure with a local sales tax
- Regulation of the drilling of private wells

Illinois home rule cities rely less on property taxes because they are able to use other kinds of taxes – especially taxes paid in part by non-residents – to reduce their dependence on property taxes.

### So, Summarize Already!

While taxation may be portrayed as the chief issue in the Home Rule debate, it is not. Home Rule communities tend to have lower property taxes than Non-Home Rule communities.

The Home Rule authority taxes spread the cost of local government to non-residents as well as to residents and ease municipal reliance on property taxes.

Additionally, Home Rule communities are empowered to promote economic development and enhance the government's ability to address a wide range of local problems and issues with local solutions and regulator measures.

Home Rule, in short, is a valuable tool in allowing government to respond to voter and quality of life concerns.

The key is to elect responsible leaders. Citizens can and should refuse to re-elect public officials whom they believe have abused Home Rule power – or for that matter, any of the powers of local government