October 26, 2026

To the Gratiot County Board of Commissioners,

We are writing to express our strong, urgent support for the approval of the Housing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) proposal for the Lakeside Estates housing development. As the Board considers this decision, it is critical to recognize that this vote is not about whether the Lakeside Estates development can move forward, as the property is zoned correctly and will adhere to neighborhood covenants. Instead, this decision is about whether Gratiot County is truly willing to take decisive action to address our severe housing shortages and invest in our community's future via the Housing TIF. We feel that the choices being made today will either enhance or destroy the ability for us all to attract future investment in Gratiot County.

Please consider the following critical factors regarding the Lakeside Estates proposal:

- **The Project is Already Fully Authorized:** The Lakeside Estates project meets all existing zoning and land-use requirements. Your decision is exclusively about the financing mechanism, not whether these homes are legally permitted to be built.
- **The TIF is Uniquely Necessary:** Without the approval of this TIF, the project cannot move forward. The developer has explicitly demonstrated that building Lakeside Estates is not financially feasible without this structured assistance.
- **Tax Incentives are a Standard Business Reality:** In today's economic climate, nearly every modern farm operation or commercial project requires some type of tax incentive to remain competitive. Housing is no different; asking a residential development to absorb skyrocketing infrastructure costs completely unaided sets an unrealistic standard that other local industries are rarely forced to meet.
- **Zero Risk to Existing Tax Revenue:** This proposal requires absolutely no upfront county funding or new taxes on our residents. It does not take away from current revenue streams; instead, a portion of the newly created tax revenue generated by the project itself will simply reimburse eligible development costs.
- **Stabilizing and Protecting Local Schools:** Gratiot County schools have faced significant enrollment declines, which directly reduces crucial per-pupil funding. Introducing new single-family homes is a proven way to attract new families, stabilize school enrollment, and protect our educational resources.

- **A Proven Catalyst for Economic Growth:** New housing drives broad local prosperity. It attracts a stable workforce, increases customer traffic for local businesses, and gives existing homeowners options to transition, which naturally opens more entry-level housing stock throughout the county. As more homes are available, property values will uncap, generating more revenue for local taxing entities.
- **Setting the Tone for Future County Investment:** Rejecting the financing for an already authorized development sends a discouraging signal to outside investors and builders. If we choose inaction, surrounding communities will continue to attract the growth and economic opportunities that belong right here in Gratiot County.

Ultimately, your vote carries implications that stretch far beyond a single development. Approving this financing tool is a vote of confidence in Gratiot County's future, its families, its schools, and its long-term economic vitality. We strongly urge the Commission to approve the TIF proposal for Lakeside Estates and the qualifying projects as they move toward fruition.

Sincerely,

Bob Studt
Village President
Village of Ashley

Kurt Giles
City Manager
City of St Louis

Greg Mapes
Mayor
City of Alma

Kevin Beeson
Supervisor
Pine River Township

Josh Leppien
Assistant City Manager
City of St Louis

Aeric Ripley
Manager
City of Alma

Jamey Conn
City Manager
City of Ithaca

Jeff Ostrander
Village Manager
Village of Breckenridge

Doug Merchant
Supervisor
Arcada Township