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By huge margin, Windsor votes to become village

JEFF GLAZE
jglaze@madison.com,
608-252-6138

Town of Windsor residents embraced the chance to reinvent their community Tuesday, voting overwhelmingly to incorporate as a village.

The referendum, which was billed as a way to protect the community's boundaries and tax base from annexation, passed 1,816 to 57.

"I think the biggest factor was that the Town Board did a great job

educating residents," Bob Wipperfurth, Windsor town chairman, said. "It's been talked about for two years, giving people a chance to digest and understand the benefits and drawbacks."

Town officials had originally ordered 2,000 ballots but had another 1,000 printed Tuesday afternoon after turnout exceeded

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Windsor

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expectations. With 1,873 ballots cast, 36 percent of Windsor's 5,232 eligible voters turned out.

Wipperfurth said the turnout was surprising considering the incorporation referendum was the only item on the ballot.

"When I voted this morning, I had people coming up and thanking town officials for information on the referendum," he said. "People acknowledged that there's kind of the chance of a lifetime here and they wanted to make sure it passes."

Windsor, a community of about 6,900 people, is largely occupied by agricultural land, however, the town has some developed pockets along its western edge that are contiguously intertwined, and almost indistinguishable from DeForest.

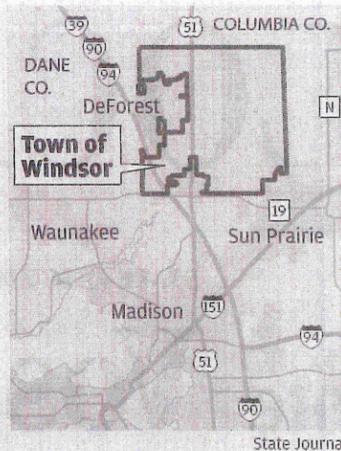
As a town, Windsor has lost significant chunks of land through annexation over the last two decades, largely to DeForest. A December 2014 fiscal analysis determined that the 2,100 acres annexed by DeForest since 1990 are currently valued at \$290 million.

Officials from the two communities discussed a merger in 2000 but ultimately decided against it. Land disagreements continued, and in 2004, DeForest proposed to annex 2,200 acres of the town, prompting a lawsuit from Windsor. That dispute ended with an out-of-court settlement and the land divided between the communities.

The scuffles were eventually settled in 2010 when both municipalities' boards approved a 20-year boundary agreement.

Tuesday's referendum approval permanently settles the dispute, making the communities equals in terms of governance and delivering Windsor officials control over boundaries, zoning and land use decisions.

"We have limited options now for the future," Judd Blau, DeForest village



Town of Windsor referendum

All wards reporting

Yes.....	1,816 (97%)
No.....	57 (3%)

president, said. "We have to change our mindset on how we budget and are left to more redevelopment or finding other alternatives instead of expanding."

"This is the final thing we needed to put us on equal footing. It's a new beginning for Windsor," Wipperfurth said. "Nov. 3, 2015 should be remembered as the day that Windsor gained its independence."

Windsor will officially become a village on Monday when a canvassing board is expected to certify the referendum results. Day-to-

day operations will carry on as they are now until Nov. 17, when Windsor will host a village organizational meeting, at which citizens will reappoint the town clerk and committee members to new roles in the village government.

Windsor's town supervisors will serve as trustees on the new Village Board on an interim basis, with all members having to run for their seats in the April election. The village presi-

dent and two trustees will have to run for a one-year term, while the other two trustees will run for two-year terms to set up staggered elections, Wipperfurth said.

Although they now have their own village, Windsor residents will keep their current Windsor, DeForest, Morrisonville or Sun Prairie mailing addresses.

A few signs around the former town will need to be replaced, but town officials have avoided identifying the community as a town in most of the community's newer signage.

"It's mostly been, 'Welcome to Windsor: Growing Forward,'" Wipperfurth said.

State Journal reporter Gabrielle DiBenedetto contributed to this report.