



Dear Neighbor:

I understand that you deserve transparency and accountability from your elected officials, and I know the importance of keeping you informed of the facts so that you are assured that your taxes are being used efficiently.

Property tax reform is a subject very much on everyone's mind. When residents discuss property taxes, they usually look first to the local government because it is the municipality that physically "collects" the taxes. However, the Town does not "keep" all of the taxes it collects. **The Town of Westfield keeps the least amount, only 16.88%, to pay for municipal operations and services.** The County of Union receives 20.76% (which includes 0.87% for Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation) and the Board of Education receives 62.36%.

Simply put, for every dollar the Town collects, it keeps **only 16.88 cents** to provide municipal services including, but certainly not limited to:

- fire service
- police
- street lighting
- pressurized fire hydrants
- senior transportation services
- school crossing guards
- Westfield Memorial Library
- public health services
- maintenance of over 110 miles of roadway
- leaf collection and disposal
- 227 acres of municipal parklands
- snow plowing
- recreational programs and facilities
- sewage and wastewater management
- curbside recycling
- conservation center
- municipal court
- administrative functions such as tax collection, tax assessment, engineering, surveying, building inspection and zoning.

I understand, too, why you have chosen to live in our magnificent Town. Westfield, with its beautiful tree-lined streets, great neighborhoods, excellent schools and vibrant town center, is the model suburban community. Much of what sets Westfield apart from other communities, though, also presents a distinct challenge to the Town. That is, 95.3% of the property taxes collected are paid by residential homeowners. Unlike many other communities, Westfield does not have industrial parks or many large commercial properties to offset the levy on the private homeowner. The Town Council and I are very much aware of this and have exercised, and will continue to exercise, particular prudence in determining the municipal portion of the budget to assure that services are delivered in the most cost-effective manner.

On the reverse side of this letter, I offer more details of where your tax dollar goes in graphic format. You may also wish to visit the Town's new and growing website (www.westfieldnj.gov) for information about the budget process. While there, I would like to direct your attention to the recently posted information on emergency preparedness for you and your family. (Please also take note of the new ".gov" e-mail addresses for Town officials and Council members.)

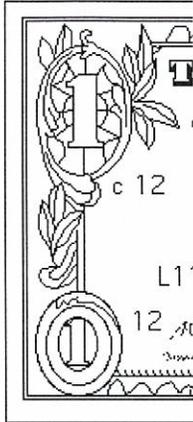
I hope this explanation is helpful in understanding where your tax dollars go and the municipal services that the Town's portion provides. Please keep in mind that I am available to discuss this, or any other matter of concern to residents, during my "Coffee with the Mayor" sessions on Saturday mornings. To arrange an appointment, please call my office (908.789.4041) and speak to my Executive Assistant, Joan. You may also write to me at the address below or e-mail your comments and concerns to mayor@westfieldnj.gov.

Sincerely,

Andrew K. Skibitsky



Where does your tax dollar go?



16.88 cents of each dollar collected is the only portion of your tax bill that is under the control of the Town Council and is solely dedicated to providing all the municipal services to the residents of the Town.



20.76 cents goes to the County of Union and includes .87 cents for the County's Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation tax. **This part of your tax bill is controlled by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders.**

62.36 cents goes to the Westfield School District. **This part of your tax bill is managed by the Board of Education.** The school tax levy is submitted to the voters for approval every April.

