



Committee of the Whole Memorandum

To: Committee of the Whole
From: Jim Culotta, City Administrator
Date: 12/11/17
Re: Revenue Stream Audit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I recommend engaging Azavar Government Solutions for the purpose of auditing existing city revenues, including our telecommunications tax and sales tax. Azavar's contingency fee structure offers Washington a no-cost and risk-free means of optimizing tax revenue and collections.

BACKGROUND

Recently, I approached Azavar Government Solution regarding their revenue audit services. Through the use of technology-based audit tools, Azavar has helped over 175 Illinois communities maximize existing revenue streams, including but not limited to telecommunications, sales, and utility taxes. For example, Azavar analyzes service addresses from utility lists to identify discrepancies, assess compliance with city/state laws, and assist in the recovery of lost monies. Additional details on their audit process are included in the attached materials.

Azavar does not charge local governments for the audit service. Instead, they would receive a portion of the "found revenue" for 36 months. Found revenue includes tax proceeds going forward and also back revenues, with the exception of the telecommunications tax. Azavar keeps monitoring through the 3-year cycle and they also do a true up in the 4th quarter each year to make sure the estimated dollars of savings are the actual dollars.

Through their contingency fee approach, Azavar splits the found revenue 55%/45% with the local government. However, if three or more local governments in our area were to join, Azavar will increase the revenue split for each community from 55%/45% to 60%/40%. I have encouraged several communities to participate; East Peoria just approved an agreement and Pekin plans to do the same in the coming week. If Washington, East Peoria, and Pekin sign with Azavar by the end of the year, the 60/40 split would be achieved. Engaging Azavar before the end of the year would allow the city to pursue more back revenue than if the agreement began in 2018.

On November 20th, Finance Committee requested this item be brought before the Committee of the Whole.

REQUESTED ACTION

Staff requests Committee input and direction.

ATTACHED

1. Azavar promotional materials and agreement

*"Azavar Government Solutions, Inc. is the only one that has the
specialized software, resources, and knowledge
to successfully review each utility and recover the maximum."*

-Mayor Gayle Smolinski, Village of Roselle, Illinois

THE AZAVAR REVIEW APPROACH

Your Azavar Government Solutions team takes a comprehensive, four-pronged approach to your review:

1. Data Analysis

No matter what type of review you need, success depends on sifting through millions of data pieces to find and correct problems. We are uniquely capable of finding the proverbial needle in the haystack through our exclusive combination of software and advanced technology. We employ proprietary review software, conduct database-mining reviews, perform GIS analysis, and correlate data error rates / patterns to find and correct all revenue errors while recovering funds for your community. Sales Tax, Food & Beverage, and Hotel/Motel are among the many tax reviews that comprise this program.

2. Financial

Following our electronic data analysis, we apply a financial review that matches theoretical dollar-for-dollar with actual payments. Our team examines your numbers to ensure expenses paid, gross revenue computed, and taxes received are all correct as established by contracts and ordinances. Through our financial analysis, we uncover hundreds of thousands of dollars in missed, underpaid, or incorrectly paid taxes owed to your community.

3. Compliance

Our thorough review ensures your data and financial information are in line with your contracts, franchises, and ordinances. We analyze all local, state, and federal laws regarding your rights in dealing with utility companies. We then inspect your agreements from a customer perspective to make sure service is delivered as expected. Along the way, we work closely with all parties to ensure compliance.

4. Tax App Suite

Azavar Government Solutions has developed a suite of applications to help municipalities reduce cost while providing efficiencies to help improve business bottom line. Our Locally Administered Tax App (LATA) is a streamlined tool designed to help municipalities receive tax filings and payments from businesses. You can also analyze sales tax remittance using our Sales Tax application (STA). This tool displays month-over-month and year-over-year gaps, as well as trends in sales tax remittance to help budget each year. Our Rebate (UITRA) App offers municipalities an electronic alternative to administer utility rebates to its citizens, as well.

Our Benefits

- No up-front fees or costs; We work on a performance / contingency basis
- Minimal or no time required from your staff
- Streamlined processes and relationships with service providers ensure quick and efficient reviews and tax recovery
- We find errors AND recover lost monies
- Wing-to-wing reviews and newly developed analytics tools designed to help municipalities work smarter instead of harder

Azavar's Unique Solutions

- We compare service addresses from utility lists and the master list while systematically analyzing data and identifying discrepancies
- We provide a financial analysis of tax & gross revenue and reporting, as well as compliance with your laws, contracts, and franchises
- We investigate utility issues, collect past errors, and correct tax coding
- Azavar Government Solutions experts find added tax revenue for your municipality
- State-of-the-Art Suite of Apps that are developed to make sure you receive all owed revenue in the future
- Budgeting tools which help finance personnel identify gaps and trends in remittance



Azavar History

Azavar Government Solutions began in 2005 as the Azavar Municipal Utility Review Program, a division of Azavar Technologies. Our review program grew quickly, spinning off as Azavar Audit Solutions, Inc. and, subsequently, Azavar Government Solutions, Inc. in 2017. Headquartered in Chicago, Azavar Government Solutions serves a large client base of government (municipal) organizations, recovering millions of dollars for our clients each year.

Purpose

Azavar Government Solutions, Inc. helps communities increase accountability to optimize their tax revenue and collections. Azavar's review process improves performance for government organizations by lowering expenses as part of our utility, telecom, sales tax, F&B, and hotel/motel review programs.

About Us

At Azavar Government Solutions, we approach reviews from a comprehensive, electronic, and programmatic perspective, analyzing millions of pieces of data per organization.

Our Experts:

- Find all errors by thoroughly reviewing data in its entirety – not just random samplings of statistical analysis
- Utilize proprietary technology to efficiently complete reviews
- Execute an exclusive approach that maximizes findings for our clients
- Have over 100 years of utility review experience combined
- Serve more than 150 municipal clients and counting

Recognized professionals in pioneering our unique review process, Azavar Government Solutions sets the standard for accountability and collections.

Representative Clients:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| • Beach Park | • La Salle |
| • Collinsville | • Plainfield |
| • Des Plaines | • Rockford |
| • Hanover Park | • Westmont |

FACT SHEET



COMPANY INFORMATION

Azavar Government Solutions, Inc.

FOUNDED

2005

PRODUCTS

Municipal Revenue Reviews
Utility & Telecom Cost Reviews
Local Administered Tax Application

TEAM MEMBERS

26 and growing

CONTACT INFORMATION

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What Is a Municipal Revenue Review as Conducted by Azavar Government Solutions, Inc.?

Through our municipal transactional tax and revenue reviews, you receive a comprehensive analysis of all tax receivables remitted to your organization by service providers, including but not limited to:

- Utility tax (electric and gas)
- Telecommunications tax
- Cable franchise fees
- Sales tax
- Local use taxes & fees
- Food & Beverage tax
- Hotel/Motel tax
- Amusement tax

We complete your review using our own resources while providing you with a contingency payment model. Your municipal revenue review includes:

1. An Exclusive Geographic Analysis

- We use state-of-the-art geographic information systems (GIS) to analyze all customers in your local jurisdiction
- Our experts employ advanced database software and advanced data-mining technology

2. Technical Expertise

- We utilize industry-leading software to uncover outdated technologies and wasteful practices
- Our experts utilize proprietary reviewing software while employing advanced data-mining technology

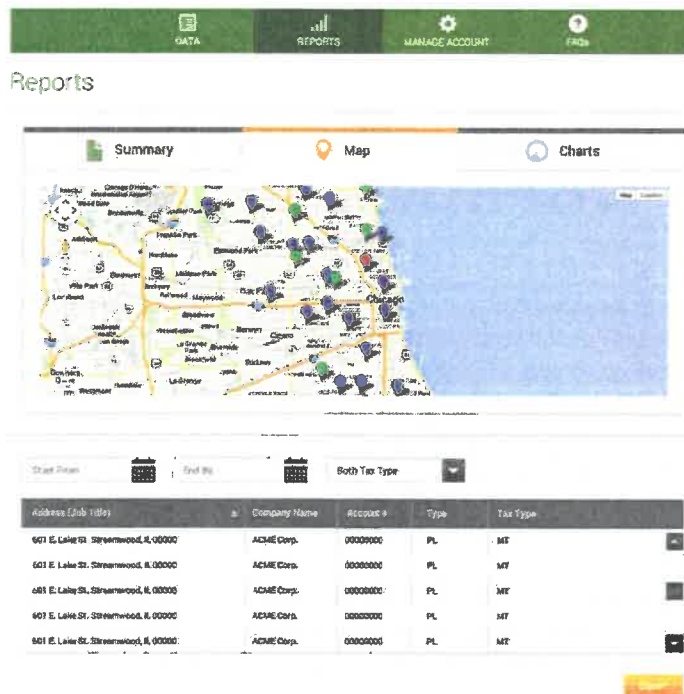
3. Strategic Relationships with Service Providers

- Our relationships foster communication, compliance, and accountability
- We facilitate franchise negotiations to meet local needs while protecting your community's property and purse

How can Azavar Government Solutions help return money to your community? Please call Tom Fagan at **312.517.3723** or email him at **TFagan@azavar.com**.

Do you need us to perform a specific analysis that has not yet been mentioned? Please let us know, as we are equipped to conduct various types of electronic reviews.

**Testimonials and financial results may not be representative of other clients' experiences and, therefore, do not guarantee future performance nor success.*



Municipal Revenue Review



Town of Normal Recovers Over \$60,000 Per Annum

Azavar Government Solutions finds and corrects address errors, revealing instances in which utility taxes were not properly collected and remitted.

Prudent Financial Management and Long-Term Planning for the Town of Normal

The Town of Normal has survived the Great Recession, with its after-effects still being felt across the country. The Town has been careful in its pursuit of policies pertaining to conservative financial management and long-term planning. This cautious approach helps to protect funding flexibility for infrastructure and public service provisions. Such an approach also helps to absorb inevitable economic setbacks, such as the closure of the Town's Mitsubishi Motors' plant in 2016.

Despite financial constraints, the Town has secured stable operating margins and fund balance levels. An important aspect of its prudent financial strategy has been the monitoring of tax and fee income. This helps to ensure taxes are accurately assessed and collected across the board.

The prosperous, largely white-collar Town of Normal is a mere two-hour drive between Chicago, St. Louis, and Indianapolis. The Town has seen rapid growth since being founded in 1854. As of the 2010 US Census, the Town of Normal had a population of 52,497.

The Town is home to the main campus of Illinois State University, where many Town residents are employed. As the Town's train service and station facilities improve, tourism, conference venues, and business travel should all expand. The Town has been dubbed 'EV Town' because of its incentives for using the electric car. Redevelopment in the Town of Normal continues to attract young professionals, and the community was recently voted one of the top ten 'Best Places for Millennial Job Seekers in the Midwest'.

Despite its progress and promise, Town managers did not know if revenues were being accurately assessed and collected. Also, Town officials had no way of learning such information. With no preexisting evidence, utility companies seemed unwilling to provide such information. Also, Town staff members lacked the time and technical skills necessary to perform an in-house investigation.

Being unable to perform its own comprehensive analysis, the Town engaged Azavar Government Solutions to conduct a tax revenue review. Azavar Government Solutions' team of experts used specialized software to search through address records while collecting reams of data. Azavar also advised Town managers on how to obtain key information from its utility companies. Azavar Government Solutions recovered significant past-due revenues from the Town's gas and electricity utility providers, while verifying, without charge, that its sales tax receipts were correct.

On top of recovered back taxes, Azavar's address corrections continue to **yield \$5,122.08** per month in recovered revenues. These gains help support to the economic stability of the Town, which earned an AAA rating from Fitch ratings in February of 2016.

"Their contingency fee structure meant that it was a no-risk proposition for us: we would share any savings or new revenue that we realized, but if nothing was discovered, we would not owe them anything for their services. I highly recommend the services of Azavar Government Solutions as a risk-free means for other municipalities to ensure the complete and equitable collection of taxes and franchise fees."

-Chris Koos, Mayor, Town of Normal





The Recover Past, Present, and Future Tax Income

Your municipality must make sure it is receiving all owed revenue from taxpayers and other sources. Azavar Government Solutions' expertise in electronic reviews has helped returned millions of dollars to local government clients.

Sales Tax Reviews

Local governments across the country have been recovering lost income through professional revenue reviews of utility, telecom, and cable fees and taxes. However, did you know that lost revenue from sales taxes can be uncovered as well?

Azavar Government Solutions helps municipalities enhance their revenues by reviewing consumption-based taxes, including the general sales tax and excise taxes (such as the use tax), taxes on hotel occupancy, motor fuels, alcohol and tobacco sales, and food and beverage.

Which Businesses Sell in Your Community?

Currently, 45 states require retailers to add sales tax to transactions conducted within the respective state. However, it can be challenging to track the monies due from sales taxes, and to track the businesses that are or should be remitting such taxes. Many municipalities simply don't have the resources necessary to monitor all local business development, shifting community boundaries, and changes in address data relative to state or business address lists.

With the explosion of Internet commerce, the situation has grown in complexity. According to a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal*, state and local governments stand to lose over \$10 billion in sales taxes not collected by web retailers. As a result, many states have brought in legislation to address this issue, the so-called "Main Street Fairness Act".

With both online and offline commerce, the question remains: How does a municipality accurately track remittance of sales tax revenues if a taxpayer bases its remittance calculations on incorrect address data?

Revenue Enhancement Through Specialized Address Reviews

It is extremely important to stay current on a growing community's boundary changes, annexations, and other geographic developments. Because of this, Azavar Government Solutions has pioneered geography-based reviews for municipalities. We use specialized geocoding software to parse through millions of data pieces in a matter of hours, identifying errors in geographic databases. This enables us to:

- Standardize the format of address databases used to compute sales tax receipts
- Establish complete address lists
- Correct errors affecting address records
- Document lost revenue and determine owed totals
- Ensure proper precautions are in place to prevent future miscoding of addresses

Azavar Government Solutions clients can utilize the expertise of our strategic partner consultants, who offer more than 100 years of experience in local government reviews. Through teamwork, our clients can achieve and sustain optimal compliance levels of sales tax collection while sharing experiences and best practices.



City of Rock Island Recovers \$133,000+ in Past Due Cable Fees and Taxes

Azavar Audit Solutions helps Rock Island maximize City revenues through specialized address audits.

Enhancing Revenues for City of Rock Island

Located on the banks of the Mississippi River 85 miles east of Cedar Rapids, the City of Rock Island, Illinois is one of the 'Quad Cities' that straddle the border between Illinois and Iowa. It had strategic importance in the 1800s when the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad built the first bridge over the Mississippi, bringing industrial investment to the area. Rock Island became a major center for military weapon manufacturing. Today, the Rock Island Arsenal remains the largest single employer in the City.

Rock Island Fights Back Against Sluggish Economy

Recently, Rock Island endured an urban blight movement that characterized much of the 1970s and 1980s. As a result of the nationwide recession, businesses disinvestment and unemployment became increasingly prevalent while population significantly shrunk.

The City countered with a program of new construction, community development, and green initiatives to help create opportunities for businesses while improving services for residents.

"Our main focus will continue to be keeping Rock Island in great financial shape with an extremely strong focus on economic development. Even though the past few years have been financially challenging for many cities and states, Rock Island continues to have a AA credit rating, a balanced budget, we pay our bills on time; we have a 90-day reserve and watch our expenses closely."

-Mayor Dennis E. Pauley, State of the City Address 2013

Maximizing Revenues to Aid Recovery

Facing tough decisions in conjunction with a post-downturn economy, the City of Rock Island must make sure it receives all owed revenue, such as utility franchise fees / taxes and sales taxes. Knowing the benefits that neighboring communities enjoyed while working with Azavar Audit Solutions, the City requested various audits to help maximize municipal revenues.

"We knew Azavar Audit staff from Illinois City and County Managers Association (ILCMA) conference meetings, and we also knew that many cities had already derived significant financial benefit from their services, and that the company has the positive reputation of getting good results for municipalities."

-John Thorson, Administrative Services Director, City of Rock Island

Azavar Audit's Expertise in Address Audits

Our address audit expertise provides a unique combination of technological skills and experience. We offer an alternative service delivery approach to municipalities, allowing them to maximize their revenues without having to devote time and energy to a complex task. We initially used our proprietary address audit software to see if Rock Island was receiving all owed utility taxes from electric and gas utilities. We found numerous errors and **returned \$6,000 per annum** to the City.

What Is a Franchise Fee Revenue & Contract Compliance Review Conducted by Azavar Government Solutions, Inc.?

A Franchise Fee Revenue & Contract Compliance Review from Azavar Government Solutions uncovers all fees owed to your community by cable providers. We conduct the review using our own resources while providing you with a contingency-payment model. Your review includes:

- 1. Geographic Analysis – An Azavar Government Solutions Exclusive Service**
 - We use state-of-the art geographic information systems (GIS) to analyze all customers in your jurisdiction
 - Our experts employ industry-leading database software and advanced data-mining technology
- 2. Franchise Compliance Analysis**
 - We analyze all local, state, and federal laws regarding your rights in working with cable companies
 - Our team thoroughly reviews your agreement to ensure that your community is fully protected
- 3. Gross Revenue Analysis**
 - We examine complex revenue streams within cable companies to determine franchise fee remittances based on gross revenue
 - Collectively, our team has over 40 years of experience reviewing solutions; We have reviewed all major US cable companies
- 4. Strategic Relationships with Service Providers**
 - Our relationships aid communication while ensuring compliance and accountability
 - We facilitate franchise negotiations to help meet your local needs while protecting your community's property and purse

How can Azavar Government Solutions help return money to your community? Please call Tom Fagan at **312.517.3723** or email him at TFagan@azavar.com.

Do you need us to perform a specific analysis that has not yet been mentioned? Please let us know, as we are equipped to conduct various types of electronic reviews.

Woodridge Recovers Lost Cable Franchise Fees



Treating taxpayers fairly is a priority for the Village of Woodridge. To ensure a level playing field, accountability must be present with all government activities, especially taxation. This is why the Village of Woodridge has partnered with Azavar Government Solutions, Inc. Following successful gas and electric revenue reviews from Azavar Government Solutions, the Village of Woodridge decided to examine other service providers in the community.

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The Village of Woodridge holds all their service providers to the same standards as the gas and electric companies reviewed by Azavar Government Solutions.

To ensure equal treatment of all utility providers, Azavar Government Solutions launched a franchise fee revenue and contract compliance review for the Village of Woodridge. This review included a compliance and legal analysis of Woodridge's current franchise agreements with all cable companies serving the municipality.

Using proprietary database technology, data mining technology, and state-of-the-art geographic information systems, Azavar Government Solutions performed a comprehensive geographic analysis of all cable customers within the Village of Woodridge, ensuring the proper receipt of all revenues.

Azavar Government Solutions developed a key strategic relationship with Comcast, a cable provider serving the Village of Woodridge, ensuring that all parties were maintaining accountability within their business practices.

Through their comprehensive review, Azavar Government Solutions' professional analysis team **recovered over \$40,000** in franchise fee revenue for the Village of Woodridge.

To learn how Azavar Government Solutions can produce similar results for your organization, contact Tom Fagan at **312.517.3723** or email him at **TFagan@Azavar.com**.



"Azavar Government has been instrumental in our success. Woodridge has been able to continue increasing services to our residents while decreasing our property tax rate."

-Mayor William Murphy, Village of Woodridge

What Is a Utility & Telecom Cost Review as Conducted by Azavar Government Solutions, Inc.?

A utility & telecom cost review by Azavar Government Solutions will determine if your monthly costs coincide with what should be spent on service providers, including but not limited to:

- Electric
- Gas
- Telecommunications
- Water

We complete your review using our own resources while providing you with a contingency payment model. Your utility expense review includes:

1. Contract Analysis

- We determine if appropriate services are offered at a predetermined rate
- Our team discovers the best possible market rates for your services, either through your current service provider or a competitor

2. Technical Expertise

- We utilize industry-leading software to uncover outdated technologies and unneeded billable items
- Our experts follow proprietary reviewing methodologies while employing advanced data-mining technology to determine any over-payments

3. Strategic Relationships with Service Providers

- Our relationships ensure communication, compliance, and accountability
- We facilitate franchise negotiations to meet local needs and protect your community's property and purse

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Utility & Telecom Cost Review



Success for the City of Rockford

Rockford, a city of more than 150,000 residents, has experienced significant change and growth over the past decade. To coincide with this growth, the city wanted to optimize its management of utility expenses, including city-wide telecommunication expenses.

City officials knew they would require assistance in implementing increased monthly cost savings on such a large scale. Determined to add funds to the monthly budget without shifting the burden to taxpayers, Rockford partnered with Azavar Government Solutions, Inc.

Azavar Government Solutions collaborated with the City of Rockford in executing a utility and telecom cost review. Through this proprietary review program, Azavar Government Solutions determined if Rockford's actual monthly costs were consistent with what should have been spent on service providers.

Throughout the review, Azavar experts scrutinized Rockford's accounts payable, revealing all billing errors on behalf of the City's major electric and telecommunications providers.

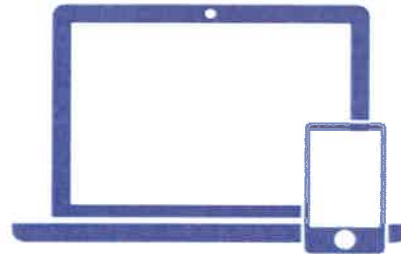
After working through millions of data pieces, Azavar Government Solutions found several instances in which Rockford overpaid service providers. In each case of overpayment, Rockford's service providers had made the billing error(s).

Azavar Government Solutions not only uncovered the billing mistakes, but also worked with the service providers to collect the funds owed to the City. Thus far, Azavar Government Solutions has **recovered more than \$75,000** for the City of Rockford.

Once the revenue was rightfully returned to the city's budget, Azavar Government Solutions facilitated negotiations to ensure accountability, compliance, efficient procedures, and overall higher standards for future taxpayers.

To learn how Azavar Government Solutions can produce similar results for your organization, contact Tom Fagan at **312.517.3723** or email him at **TFagan@Azavar.com**.

Our Technology



1) THE LOCALLY ADMINISTERED TAX APP THE LOCALLY ADMINISTERED TAX APPLICATION CAN TRIM WEEKS OFF THE TIME IT TAKES TO ACCESS TAX REVENUE COLLECTED FROM RESTAURANTS BARS, AND HOTELS.



Locally Administered
Tax Application (LATA)



Sales Tax Application
(STA)

2) THE SALES TAX APP HELPS YOUR MUNICIPALITY EFFICIENTLY COLLECT ALL OWED SALES TAX REVENUE.



3) THE UTILITY TAX REBATE APP INCREASES ACCURACY, TRANSPARENCY, ACCESSIBILITY, AND SECURITY THROUGHOUT THE UTILITY TAX REBATE PROCESS.

Utility Tax Rebate
Application (ULTRA)

"Computerizing the collection of food and beverage taxes would provide useful data for the city. Azavar will help zoom us up 15 years. Right now, it's all on paper"

-Finance Director James Ghedotte, City of Joliet
mySuburbanLife.com



Village of Plainfield Unearths \$141,000+ Annually in New Revenues

Azavar Government Solutions finds and corrects errors,
including overcharges, by utility providers.

Rebuilding Community in Wake of Disaster

Though a small rural community, Plainfield has endured significant drama in recent history. On August 28, 1990, the Village was hit by an F5 tornado, causing 29 deaths and hundreds of injuries while destroying property along the way. Plainfield was determined to rebuild the community, restoring its historic Downtown area, helping to develop the Lincoln Highway, and promoting environmentally friendly 'Green Village' ordinances and programs.

Today, people are continually drawn to Plainfield as a vibrant community with a small-town feel. Attractions include picturesque neighborhoods, quaint shops, and excellent services, such as the Edward Plainfield Medical Campus. Several areas of farmland have been sold, allowing for new residential subdivisions.

Village Officials Demonstrate Sound Financial Management

Responsible financial management has helped the Village successfully rebuild prosperity while greatly expanding its residential areas.

"Plainfield was \$4.4 million in debt when I took office, and now we are \$600,000 in the black ... Average residents pay \$1.47 per day for Plainfield services. We still maintain a AA S&P bond rating, which indicates we are stable."

-Mayor Michael Collins, 2013 State of the Village Address

Plainfield's managers and locally elected officials are accountable for the proper management of Village funds. Therefore, management understands that properly run government requires fair, accurate collection of fees and taxes across all taxpayers. These principles are especially important in a municipality with continuous burgeoning growth as new parcels of land are annexed for development.

Azavar Government Solutions Returns More Than \$141,000 Annually to Plainfield

Having readdressed its entire community following a devastating natural disaster, Plainfield sought Azavar Government Solutions to review the coding of taxable addresses. Our team of experts examined address databases, discovering and correcting more than 160 errors. Thus, new annual revenue had been returned to the Village.

The Village is both a taxing authority and a customer of its utility providers. Accordingly, the Azavar Government Solutions team conducted cost reviews of the Village's utility bills. We once again found and returned monies owed to the Village due to overcharging by utility providers.

Azavar Government Solutions reviewed Plainfield's income from utility fees and taxes, discovering mistakes in the computation of its natural gas utility taxes. We corrected these errors and assisted in the collection of past due sums. In total, Azavar Government Solutions returned more than \$141,000 per year in new revenues to the Village of Plainfield. Along the way, we helped the Village enhance their revenues and maintain services without levying new taxes on their residents.