



The More They Give, the More They Take

Published on *Show-Me Institute* (<https://showmeinstitute.org>)



[Monterey Public Library / Creative Commons 2.0](#)

By: *Graham Renz*

The bottom line regarding tax giveaways like tax increment financing (TIF) and other subsidies is this: The more officials hand out to developers and special interests, the [more ordinary taxpayers](#) need to cough up to make up the difference. It looks like University City Public Library (UCPL) officials, like many officials [caught in the middle of generous subsidy deals](#), know this well.

A [recent UCPL survey](#) asked some University City residents how they felt about a potential property tax hike to bolster the library's budget. The increase mentioned would raise library tax rates from 28 cents per \$100 of assessed value to 40 cents per \$100 of assessed value. So, for example, a home with an appraised value of \$100,000 would pay an additional \$23 or so per year in property taxes if such a rate increase were to occur.

What's notable is not that a public institution is asking for more cash, but that officials seem to be testing the waters as a massive TIF-funded development is being debated. For the proposed I-170 and Olive development, [taxpayers are being asked to part with \\$70.5 million](#) over the next 20 or so years. Much of that \$70.5M would come from property taxes that would otherwise go to schools, libraries, and other jurisdictions. So, in short, if the development goes through as

proposed, the library (and school and other districts) would miss out on millions in revenue.

Now, I'm *not* claiming that UCPL is considering a tax hike *because of* the I-170 and Olive development, but *I wouldn't be surprised* if there was a connection between the two. This would hardly be the first time a library or library district had to go to voters for additional funding because of loose tax subsidy policies. It was [just in 2016](#) that, after years of [losing out on millions in revenues](#) because of tax giveaways, the Mid-Continent Public Library in Kansas City asked voters to approve a tax hike. At the time, my colleague Patrick Tuohy aptly dubbed the tax hike the "[TIF Tax.](#)"

UCPL and those it serves would likely benefit greatly from extra funding. UCPL has a modest staff of 16 employees and spends around \$1.6-1.8 million a year ([see pp. 165-171](#)). Besides some pension liabilities somewhat out of their control, UCPL officials appear to be good stewards of the taxpayer funding they're given. It's just a shame that libraries and other districts are impacted so much by misguided economic development programs like TIF, and it's an even bigger shame that taxpayers are often left holding the bag.

Tags:

- [University City](#)

About the Author



Graham Renz
Policy Analyst

Graham Renz is a policy analyst at the Show-Me Institute.

Read Online

<https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/subsidies/more-they-give-more-they-take>

Links

[1] <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/subsidies/more-they-give-more-they-take>

[2] <https://www.flickr.com/photos/montereypubliclibrary/4924425328/in/photolist-8v9Y5Y-9tB35n-UNsyXe-WbYdDj-26Zq3Kg-xekATm-aveX2G-5ZWrtX-4wG6zc-uAC21-picLJv-2pf6H-KWUwV-KXick-9yJ1iA-2457Fkb-bUBca2-8MfKit-EsPsQr-5FMdqH-dMenyV-p8f8d6-77cNUB-pzFQaQ-bXjpbj-aveX3m-bXjpKw-orj3xb-KX4MD-KXe-bfqYvn-4Q9t2q-8pWEEv-edHxk2-bsBQHW-6bD5UF-zF4a-89t38r-bQGRBc-cjUkT-6Py7Nt-8vBVZr-8KxFmt-5Z7tu9-6xmHDy-dhQMmR-9Rxbcv-bx1g9k-6xhy1c-cT2g2E>

[3] <https://projects.cberdata.org/reports/TifEconEffects-012815.pdf>

[4] <https://www.riverfronttimes.com/newsblog/2018/06/07/university-city-tif-proposal-has-residents-fighting-back>

[5] <https://patch.com/missouri/universitycity/u-city-library-survey-includes-questions-proposed-tax-hike>

[6] <https://www.bizjournals.com/stlouis/news/2018/06/28/commentary-taxpayer-largesse-unnecessary-was>

teful.html

[7] <http://www.plattecountycitizen.com/theplattecountycitizen/voters-overwhelmingly-approve-tax-levy-increase-for-mid-continent-public-library9112016>

[8] <http://content.mymcpl.org/archive/files/d157a4d286914b2e4cc494241536c482.pdf>

[9] <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/budget/tif-tax>

[10] <https://www.ucitymo.org/DocumentCenter/View/12670/FY-2019-Proposed-Budget?bidId=>

[11] <https://showmeinstitute.org/tags/university-city>

Mission Statement

Advancing liberty with responsibility by promoting market solutions for Missouri public policy.

Show-Me Institute

5297 Washington Place 3645 Troost Avenue

Saint Louis, MO 63108 Kansas City, MO 64109

Phone: (314) 454-0647 Phone: (816) 287-0370

Fax: (314) 454-0667

Email: info@showmeinstitute.org

Support Our Work

The Show-Me Institute is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Make your tax deductible contribution today: <http://ShowMeInstitute.org/donate>