



MUCKROCK

CivicLab Set To Illuminate ALL Illinois TIFs With Support From Muckrock Foudation

The MuckRock Foundation (<https://www.muckrock.com>) has awarded the CivicLab (www.civiclab.us) a grant of \$10,000 from its Gateway Program to investigate and expose ALL the Tax Increment Financing Districts (TIFs) in Illinois. The CivicLab will be examining all the TIFs of Illinois for 2020.

Tax Increment Financing Districts are special entities created by a municipality in the name of “economic development” that captures and sequesters property tax dollars in secretive accounts controlled by local mayors. These public dollars are then doled out in an opaque and unaccountable manner to clouted developers and special projects with little or no oversight, evaluation, or possibility of redress.

Founder of the TIF project, Tom Tresser, said “We have been invited to present at over 188 public meetings and we are working with neighbors in 17 cities on economic justice projects centered on TIF projects being bullied through the local government. The grant from MuckRock will allow us, for the first time, to closely examine ALL 1,423 TIFs across Illinois. We expect to making news when these numbers are published for the first time in mid January of 2023. We will be revealing BIG numbers – such as: (1) total TIF property tax removal for the entire state, (2) how much property tax dollars was sitting in ALL the TIF accounts at the end of 2020, (3) total expenditures from Illinois TIFs in 2020, (4) Top Ten lists across multiple categories, and much more!”

MuckRock is a non-profit collaborative news site that offers tools to keep our government transparent and accountable. They operate DocumentCloud (<https://www.documentcloud.org>) where hundreds of thousands of public records are stored and available for inspection and use. MuckRock co-founder and CEO Michael Morisy announced the award, “MuckRock is dedicated to helping the public better understand how their government and communities work, and the TIF Illumination Project is a great example of bringing together documents, data and community to do just that,” said Morisy. “We’re honored to have CivicLab push forward innovative new forms of transparency with DocumentCloud.”

Other Gateway Project awardees are Centro de Periodismo Investigativo, Puerto Rico’s Center for Investigative Journalism; Fiquem Sabendo’s Opening Environmental Sanctions Reports Project in Brazil; and Data Liberation Project’s FEMA Housing Reports Collection. More information on these projects -> www.tinyurl.com/Muckrock-Gateway-2023.

“Each of these projects is expanding the ways that newsrooms and civil society organizations can use DocumentCloud to ensure widespread and ongoing public access to essential public records. We’re really grateful to the Filecoin Foundation for the Distributed Web for making these improvements to a vital ecosystem possible,” said Morisy.

CivicLab CEO Jonathan Peck said, “We are thrilled to be in collaboration with the MuckRock team to start the process to expose ALL the TIFs in America. At the CivicLab, after closely investigating Tax Increment Financing programs in Chicago and across the USA, we call them out as racist and corrupting. We believe the people of Illinois and every place that has a TIF MUST know the information we are about to investigate and reveal.”

The CivicLab is a Chicago based, Black-led nonprofit “do tank” for civic engagement, government accountability, and social justice. We have been exposing the harms of TIFs since 2013 via our TIF Illumination Project (www.tifreports.com).

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