



February 28, 2023

More information: Tom Tresser

tom@civicl原因ab.us – 312-804-3230

CivicLab Reveals Illinois Statewide TIF Totals for 2020 - \$1.5 Billion In Property Taxes Removed

The CivicLab released the results of the first ever TIF Illumination for ALL the Tax Increment Financing Districts for Illinois for the year 2020. The project was made possible by a grant from the **MuckRock Foundation via its Gateway Grants program**.

The analysis reviewed 1,454 TIF districts from 535 municipalities across 95 counties.

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. TIFs **remove property taxes** from the proper public flow or distribution to units of local government who rely on property taxes for operation. 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.

| ILLINOIS TIF ILLUMINATION FOR 2020 | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1,454 TIFs | 535 municipalities | 95 counties |
| \$1,514,541,902 in property taxes removed | \$1,175,252,346 spent by all TIFs | \$2,260,726,676 LEFT in accounts year end |
| \$578,930,223 = \$ moved, transferred (38%) | \$341,833,541 total debt financing across 316 TIFs (30% of all expenditures) | |
| Missing TIF reports = 79 from 36 municipalities | TOTAL ILLINOIS TIF TAKINGS 1980-2020 = \$25 billion | |

“Our research reveals some startling numbers,” said TIF Illumination Project organizer Tom Tresser, “Over \$1.5 billion in property taxes have been removed from public circulation by Illinois’ TIF districts in 2020. That number will rise when we get the 79 missing reports. Some 36 municipalities are in violation of state law and there is apparently no meaningful penalties being enforced upon these delinquent towns and cities. These secretive critters spent about \$1.2 billion and collectively paid debt finance charges of \$342 million. We hope this report will spur local investigations into this opaque and unaccountable program across the state.”

The details and a spreadsheet are available at <https://tifreports.com/illinois-illumination>. There you will find totals by municipality by county, and lists of TIFs sorted by several criteria, including municipalities with five or more TIFs. You will see the reflections of our Illuminators after crawling through hundreds of these annual reports, and much more.

Our team of TIF Illuminators consisted of young community organizers Leslie Cortez (they/them) – www.lesliecortez.org, Estefany Figueroa (they/them) - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/estefany-figueroa-779400137>, and Sebastian Nalls (he/him) - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sebastian-nalls-19b90916b>. Their reflections and insights from doing this work can be found at <https://tifreports.com/illinois-illumination/reflect>.

Michael Morisy, CEO, MuckRock, applauded the project, "When we launched the Gateway Grants program, we were looking for projects with important document collections that were hidden or hard to get out into the public, and the maze of TIF filings — from obscure and shifting websites to hidden in literal filing cabinets — perfectly fit the bill. The CivicLab team tapped and energized a group of Illuminators to understand the impact that these agreements on their

communities, and it's an amazing example not only of the power of public information, but what it means to truly put that into the hands of the public. We're incredibly excited and proud of what CivicLab and the Illuminators have already done, and we are excited about the future potential for this work in Illinois and beyond.”

CivicLab CEO [Jonathan Peck](#) said, “The CivicLab’s TIF Illumination Project continues to unearth how public dollars and resources are being utilized to enrich the pockets of a cabal of politicians and developers who seemingly have the sole interest of lining their campaign war chests and their own pockets at the expense of taxpayers. The racist and corrupt Tax Incrementing Financing scheme continues to rob billions of dollars from communities across Illinois and diminishing much needed public resources at a time when we need these resources the most. A significant portion of this steal of public funds derives from Black and Brown communities. Our so called “progressive” and “down for the people” elected and community leadership across political parties – from the Governor’s House to City and Township Halls across this great state of ours continue to support this racist and corrupt practice. To even have a chance at tackling and addressing our most salient issues that our families and communities face we need to have an honest conversation about how TIFs work and how they continue to devastate our public services. We need to hold those responsible for their actions.” [Read Jonathan’s complete message.](#)

The CivicLab is a Chicago based Black-led nonprofit "do tank" to advance work in government accountability, civic engagement, and social justice. We conduct research and training around local government finance, budgeting, community organizing, nonprofit management, public policy advocacy, and running for local office. Our practices adhere to the frameworks of the Cycle of Liberation and the Ladder of Participation, and we use engagement tools from the Popular Education, Direct Action Organizing, and Movement Building playbooks. Our work is at <http://www.civiclub.us> – <http://www.tifreports.com> – <http://www.wearenotbroke.org> – <http://www.powerinstitute.us>.

Our TIF Illumination Project is the only civic project in America that relentless and thoroughly interrogates Tax Increment Finance Districts and their impact on communities of color. This work has spawned over 185 public meetings, 40 open enrollment workshops, and alliances with economic justice activists in 14 cities - <https://tifreports.com/tif-organizing-services>.

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.

###