



# INTERFACE

## PUBLIC FINANCE INITIATIVE REPORTS FINDINGS ON TWO NEW STUDIES OF MISSOURI'S PROPERTY TAX

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PPRC's Public Finance Initiative (PFI) recently published two reports that address the property tax policy and administration in Missouri. The first report, titled *Lessons from Other States for Improving Missouri's Property Tax*, was initially prepared at the request of members of the Missouri Legislature's Joint Committee on Tax Policy. It offers an analysis of the essential policies and practices necessary to achieve and maintain equitable property valuation and examines the processes other states use to achieve this objective. The study continues to evolve and expand as it aims to bring the benefit of comparative knowledge to Missouri's policy makers, regulators and administrators as they strive to improve property tax policy, practice, and results.

A second study, *What's the Value of Missouri Farmland? Examining the History and Outcomes of the Tax Policy Based on Productive Capacity*, describes and explains Missouri's experience with the use of productive valuation rather than market values for taxing farmland. It also provides a comprehensive description of the effects of this policy over the last twenty years. Furthermore, by comparing valuations using several indicators of value, it raises significant questions for future research and policy debate.



THE PUBLIC FINANCE INITIATIVE CONDUCTS RESEARCH ON POLICIES AFFECTING GOVERNMENTAL REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES. RECENT STUDIES HAVE FOCUSED ON PROPERTY TAX VALUES ACROSS MISSOURI.

The Public Finance Initiative is the most recent addition to the Public Policy Research Center. The unit was established in early 2006, in response to PPRC's expanding research in public finance issues. Managed by **Steven Gardner**, this unit conducts research focusing on policies affecting governmental revenue and expenditures at the state and local level, as well as the implementation of those policies. The Public Finance Initiative aims to produce and communicate objective, high quality research that informs policy makers, regulators, administrators, interest groups, and the public, as well as raise new questions worthy of future study or debate. "We will primarily engage in applied research that is of potential value in the short-term," said Gardner. "However, we believe the lessons and methodologies from economics, public administration, statistics, and political science provide substantial guidance for addressing current issues. Additionally, what we learn from studying actual practices can further inform the academic world." The Initiative also compares Missouri's policy and practice with other states in order to identify best practices that Missouri can model. It further works to identify previously unrecognized opportunities for more effective Missouri policy or practice.

At present, the PFI is pursuing two primary research areas -- property tax policy and administration, and education finance. The effect of these policy areas is mostly local, but the policies and practices are prescribed mostly at the state level. This creates an opportunity to study inter-governmental cooperation as well as the substantive topics. In addition, both of these important policy areas are evolving continually, so new information is in high demand. "Some issues come and go, but neither the property tax nor education finance fit into that category," explained Gardner. "They evolved almost constantly. Unless quality information, understanding, and expertise is readily available when policy makers need to act, then policy makers are forced to act based upon perception, incomplete information, etc. We hope to fill that gap -- initially in these two policy arenas, later in most of the major revenue and expenditure areas."

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## PPRC RECEIVES \$200,000 NEW DIRECTIONS GRANT FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP WITH AFFTON

Through the Affton Community Partnership, Affton and the University of Missouri-St. Louis have come together to tackle issues that Affton residents and leaders say may threaten the community's future. On November 22, PPRC was awarded a two-year grant of nearly \$200,000 to fund a community-building project in Affton. Known as a New Directions grant, funds were awarded from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) program.

"Located along the southwest border of St. Louis in unincorporated St. Louis County, Affton is like many other inner-ring suburban communities," said **Terry Jones**, professor of political science at UMSL, PPRC faculty partner, and principal investigator for the grant. "The area is ideal for a project like this because it has opportunities that can be developed —convenient location, strong tradition — as well as challenges to be addressed." Among the areas of concern in Affton are an aging population and housing stock. "Affton is distinctive from other inner-ring suburbs in that it has a growing population of new Americans," added Jones. The community is home to



a burgeoning population of immigrants, including a large number of Bosnian refugees who have yet to be fully integrated into the existing community.

Titled the Affton Community Partnership, the project will focus on three key areas.

**Welcoming New Americans to the Affton community:** Activities include developing a New Americans Task Force, creating an outreach and engagement strategy designed to recruit and facilitate community involvement of New Americans, and providing seminars and technical assistance services for governmental officials, police officers, business owners and school district personnel. The Task Force began its work in early March and is supported by graduate students in UMSL's School of Social Work.

**Supporting Affton's older residents:** The project has created a community stakeholders committee and will be conducting a housing needs assessment focusing on the older population. One of the first steps will be to conduct a survey of older residents to assess housing needs and

current use of community resources. The survey results and work of the committee will be used to develop a set of strategies to better match the housing environment with the abilities and needs of Affton older residents.

**Building capacity to bring about change:** The University is assisting the volunteer-based Affton Community Betterment Association to develop a strategic plan that will better focus resources and develop partnerships to strengthen and sustain the community. Affton leaders are also participating in the University's Neighborhood Leadership Academy.

The project has wide support among government officials and Affton community groups. **Charlie A. Dooley**, St. Louis County Executive, said improving the economic well-being of communities across the county, including Affton, is a top priority. "When UMSL approached us seeking a St. Louis County community for the HUD Community Outreach Partnerships Centers program, we lobbied hard for Affton to be identified as that community, and we are delighted that this area will benefit from the grant and from UMSL's expertise," Dooley said.

"The issues we are addressing in this project were identified by Affton residents and community organizations as essential to make sure the community remains a great place to live and work," said **Kay Gasen**, director of the Community Partnership Project and COPC project manager. The Community Partnership Project was recently formed from PPRC's Community and Neighborhood Development unit. This year, HUD awarded only seven New Directions grants nationwide, totaling more than \$1.3 million. "We are pleased to be selected from this very competitive pool of universities, and we look forward to working in Affton over the next two years," said Gasen. The University of Missouri – St. Louis was eligible to apply for the New Directions grant because of PPRC's success with a 2001 HUD COPC grant focusing on the Old North St. Louis neighborhood in the City of St. Louis. "With this new grant, we have extended our work to another geographic area – Affton – and expanded our focus to include issues related to housing and immigration, as well as community leadership," said Gasen.

Project partners include the Affton Community Betterment Association, Affton Chamber of Commerce, Affton School District, Bayless School District, FOCUS St. Louis, International Institute, St. Louis County Department of

Planning and St. Louis County Economic Council. University of Missouri – St. Louis partners include the Public Policy Research Center, Gerontology Program, Department of Political Science, Public Policy Administration Masters Program, and School of Social Work, along with University of Missouri Extension. ♡

## PPRC'S LATEST BOOK EXPLORES ST. LOUIS' HIDDEN ASSETS

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On April 4, *Hidden Assets: Connecting the Past to the Future of St. Louis* hit the bookshelves. In this second volume in the St. Louis Metromorphosis book series, several scholars address the challenges St. Louis faces—segregation, crime, and stagnant growth—while also focusing on the promising but often-overlooked aspects of the city, its “hidden assets.”

It is evident to the authors that St. Louis has long been plagued by problems. Annual statistics grimly highlight population loss and crime rates; deteriorating public services exacerbate the spreading poverty; residential areas are highly segregated according to wealth and race; political fragmentation abounds, and

effective leadership is rare. Indeed, based on standard measures of strength, vitality, and growth, the region's future appears dim.

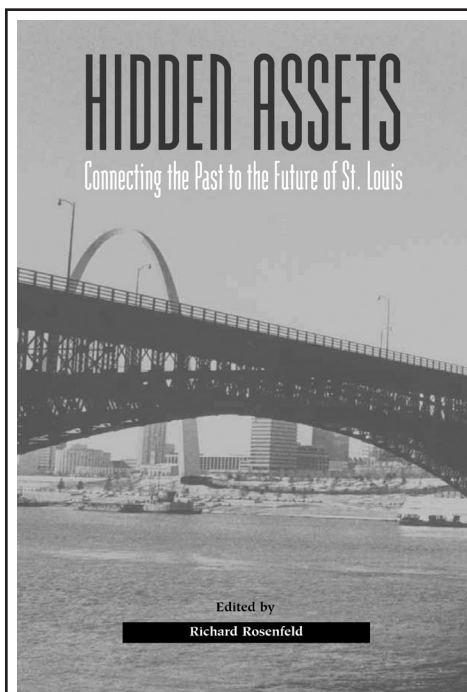
However, the authors argue that the above indicators are not the only ones by which the present and possible future of St. Louis should be assessed. Both the central city and the surrounding region contain many hidden assets that, if effectively nurtured and promoted, augur a brighter future for the St. Louis metropolitan area. The authors identify these unexpected assets and argue that they distinguish St. Louis from other metropolitan areas, including regions that rank higher on many standard performance measures.

Each chapter in *Hidden Assets* contains an essay that highlights concrete attractions, such as the city's major medical complex, its excellent and diverse public and private schools, and its robust blues music tradition, as well as more abstract features such as its historic relationship with the Mississippi River. This volume explores the implications of St. Louis's idiosyncrasies - - from the city's stellar sports tradition to the importance of barbershops in African American communities – for sustainable long-term growth in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

Produced by PPRC and published by the Missouri Historical Society Press, this book is part of the St. Louis Metromorphosis book series. The series approaches the St. Louis Metropolitan Area from many angles, and illuminates its evolutions and revolutions over time. The series focuses on economic, social, political, and historical aspects of the region.

*Hidden Assets* was edited by **Rick Rosenfeld**, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the UM-St. Louis. The volume contains ten essays by prominent scholars from the St. Louis region.

Distributed by the University of Missouri Press (800.828.1894, or online at [www.umsystem.edu/upress](http://www.umsystem.edu/upress)). You also may obtain a copy from PPRC ([pprc@umsl.edu](mailto:pprc@umsl.edu), 314.516.5277) or at the Missouri History Museum's Louisiana Purchase gift shop (314.454.3172). Published by the Missouri Historical Society Press, ISBN: 1-883982-56-1 (13-digit ISBN: 978-1-883982-56-0), \$22.95 ♡



HIDDEN ASSETS: A NONOBVIOUS  
FUTURE FOR ST. LOUIS PRESENTS  
A RELATIVELY UNEXPLORED BUT  
COMPLETELY REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE  
TO THE CURRENT PREDEICTIONS  
FOR THE ST. LOUIS REGION.



**SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 16 AND 17**  
**GOVERNMENT VS. GOVERNANCE IN METROPOLITAN NORTH AMERICA:**  
**WHERE IS IT NOW; WHERE IS IT GOING?**

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On June 16 and 17, PPRC will host *Government vs. Governance in Metropolitan North America: Where Is It Now; Where Is It Going?* This two-day conference, held on the University of Missouri - St. Louis campus, will examine the ways that metropolitan regions deal with the governance versus government trade-off. Twelve panelists from the U.S., Mexico and Canada will present from academic and professional perspectives, providing both the theory and actual experience relevant to North American metropolitan areas.

The conference is a follow-up to a 1994 symposium sponsored by PPRC. The original conference, entitled Metropolitan Governance without Metropolitan Government, featured presentations by academics and practitioners from Canada, Mexico, the U.S., and Europe. Attendees came from metropolitan areas across Europe and North America.

The conference on June 16 and 17 will revisit the discussion as well as explore various aspects of both approaches. "Now, twelve years later, it seems apropos to examine the trade off between governance and government in metropolitan areas once again," explained **Don Phares**, Professor Emeritus of Economics and Public Policy at UM-St. Louis, and conference organizer. "Should metro areas provide public goods and services through informal governance arrangements such as contracts or cooperative purchasing, or is it more effective to use a formal government structure such as multi-county special districts, city/county mergers, or true metro governments? Or is there something in between?" The conference will focus on changes over the last twelve years, and will look to where things are heading in metro areas across North America.

Participants and the country they will represent include:

*Canada*

**Alan F. J. Artibise,**  
Arizona State University

**Philip H. Wichern,**  
Dallas Community College District

*Mexico*

**Mario Bassols Ricardez,**  
Metropolitan University of Mexico, Iztapalapa, Mexico City

*United States*

**E. Terrence (Terry) Jones,**  
University of Missouri -- St. Louis

**Dennis Judd,**  
University of Illinois -- Chicago

**Dave Laslo,**  
University of Missouri -- St. Louis

**Donald F. Norris,**  
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

**Don Phares,**  
University of Missouri -- St. Louis

**Mark S. Rosentraub,**  
Cleveland State University

**Hank V. Savitch,**  
University of Louisville

**Ronald K. Vogel,**  
University of Louisville

**Ronald K. Vogel,**  
University of Louisville



When **Mel Watkin**, Director of the PPRC Photography Project and Gallery, isn't busy organizing her next PPRC exhibit, you might find her stenciling poems in large letters on the even-larger flood wall along the Mississippi Riverfront Trail in Illinois. Watkin, along with poet **Jane Ellen Ibur**, was commissioned by the Grace Hill Settlement House to help beautify the trail. The project serves as an interpretive piece about the river.

Watkin and Ibur collaborated to find the concept for the project, and Ibur wrote a series of ten poems from the perspective of the Mississippi River that reflect the passage of time and the changes imposed on the natural environment. Watkin devised a method for stenciling the poems on the flood wall, using spray paint and eight-foot templates that she hand-cut from sheets of PVC plastic. She is surrounding the poems with a simplified version of the trumpet vine, a native plant that plays an important role in the area's ecosystem.

Although Watkin initially had help from the Americorp Rangers, she is responsible for the physical work of painting the poems and vine along the flood wall. The final project will consist of three of the ten poems. Visually, they will be connected by the vine, which will sprawl onto the trail itself. Watkin anticipates that the work will be completed by June 2006.

"Despite driving across the river several times a week, before I became part of this project I spent very little time down on the river," said Watkin. "Working along the river's edge has certainly given me a new understanding of this natural space. Over the past months I have seen barges churning through the early morning fog. I've had shouted conversations with barge workers about



DETAIL OF A STENCILED VINE ON THE TRAIL

the poems. I've seen flowers bloom and fade and, much to my surprise, encountered foxes, coyotes, wild turkeys, and great blue herons. As I have been working many of the bicyclists, runners and workers who use the trail every day have stopped to read the poems, ask me about the project and tell me their stories of the trail. The goal of this project is part beautification and part communication--a desire to draw the city's attention to this great asset. I have seen first hand what the trail has to offer and feel honored to have a small part in its revitalization."

The project, funded by grants from the Regional Arts Commission and the Great Rivers Greenway, seeks to enhance the section of the trail that runs north from downtown St. Louis. The completed project will grace the trail until the area undergoes revamping efforts in 2007. The poems can be viewed on the flood wall along the trail between the ADM Silo and Mosenthein Island. ♡



PREPARING THE FLOOD WALL FOR POEM STENCILS



## STARS AND HEROES TO GRACE THE NEXT PPRC GALLERY

The next PPRC Photo Gallery is guaranteed to be a hit – a musical hit, that is. The exhibit, titled “Point-of-View: 2Read + 2Write = 4Music”, features photos of and by the students participating in the 2Read + 2Write = 4Music project at Gary Gore Elementary School in Jennings. The project is directed by Darron Nelsen as part of the Jennings School District’s Stars and Heroes after-school program. Under the auspices of 2Read + 2Write = 4Music, the students learn to write and perform songs, and at the end of the year they record them in a professional sound studio. The students are producing a CD from their work, and on May 19th they will perform at the Touhill Performing Arts Center.

PPRC Photography Project director Mel Watkin worked with eleven of the students in the program over the course of a year, helping them to explore different ways they might present themselves as artists and musicians. The students, aged 10-13, took photos of each other with this in mind, capturing themselves at work on song composition, performance, and recording. Working with Watkin, they also learned to shoot portraits and experimented with different backgrounds and poses. These are the images that will be featured in PPRC’s Point-of-View exhibit.

“Point-of-View: 2Read + 2Write = 4Music”, opens on May 2 in the PPRC gallery and on May 9 at the William D. Tharp Civic Center in Jennings. Both exhibits run through September 26.

The Stars and Heroes Program is an after-school program for students in grades 5 through 8. Directed by Kelly Thames, the program’s mission is to create a community of students, parents, teachers, businesses and faith-based organizations who are dedicated to the success of all children. The program provides a variety of life skills revolving around health, safety, career options, community service, and college and university exploration. The program also offers specialized enrichment in areas like technology, communication, sports, mathematics, and the arts.

This PPRC Gallery Point-of-View exhibition is made possible by Schiller’s Camera and Video, the William D. Tharp Civic Center in Jennings, the Regional Arts Commission, Missouri Arts Council, the Arts and Education Council of Greater St. Louis and the Public Policy Research Center at UMSL.

Coming May 9 to the PPRC Photo Gallery:  
“Point-of-View: 2Read + 2Write = 4Music”

The exhibit will be on display at the following locations:

PPRC Photo Gallery, UM – St. Louis  
One University Boulevard, 362 Social Sciences/  
Business Building,  
St. Louis, MO 63121  
Phone: 314-516-5273

Web: <http://pprc@umsl.edu>

Opening Reception: May 2, Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Exhibit runs from May 2 to September 26, 2006

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday

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William D. Tharp Civic Center  
8720 Jennings Station Road,  
St. Louis, MO 63136  
Phone: 314-388-3040

Opening Reception: May 9, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

Exhibit runs from May 9 to September 26, 2006

Hours: Weekdays, 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Currently in the PPRC Photo Gallery:

“Point-of-View: From Bosnia to Buerkle Middle School”

This exhibit features photos of and by Bosnian Middle School students, and explores family and community life from the perspective of these students, who define themselves both as kids and new Americans. The exhibit runs through April 26, and may be viewed at the following locations:

PPRC Photo Gallery, UM – St. Louis  
One University Boulevard, 362 Social Sciences/  
Business Building,  
St. Louis, MO 63121  
Phone: 314-516-5273

Exhibit runs from January 31 to April 26, 2006

Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday

-- and --

Grbic Restaurant  
4071 Keokuk,  
St. Louis, MO 63116  
Phone: 314-772-3100

Exhibit runs from February 1 to April 26, 2006

Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-10 p.m.; Saturday 4 - 10 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m.- 10 p.m.

The exhibit is co-sponsored by Allied Photo-color, The Regional Arts Commission, Missouri Arts Council and Arts and Education Council of Greater St. Louis. ♡



**AFTER THE SUPREMES: GO  
GIRLS' CD COVER,**  
AN IMAGE FROM THE UPCOMING  
“2READ + 2WRITE = 4MUSIC”  
EXHIBIT



## PUBLIC FINANCE INITIATIVE REPORTS FINDINGS

(continued from front cover)

One project currently in the works is a major research study analyzing actual property tax assessment levels in twenty-five Missouri counties to determine whether the distribution of state aid to local school districts under Missouri's new education funding law is based on data that is reliable or seriously flawed. At the same time, the methodology used will help answer questions about whether property taxes are fair and uniform in the counties studied and will isolate specific problem areas.

As the Public Finance Initiative continues to expand, it will add other areas of focus. In the meantime, the unit also closely follows "hot" topics, such as proposed tax increases, expenditure limits, etc. As resources allow, the most important will be examined.

Steven Gardner, Public Finance Initiative Manager, has a background in state politics and in political science. He served as a Missouri State Representative for three terms, from 1975-1981, and he was a candidate for the US Congress in 1980. More recently, Gardner has been pursuing a Ph.D. in political science as he works for the PPRC. Working with Mr. Gardner on the Public Finance team are Research Specialists Colleen Bradford and Mamoun Benmamoun (Ben). Colleen has a master's degree in Public Policy Administration from UMSL. Ben is working on his Ph.D. dissertation at St. Louis University in Public Policy Analysis and Administration. He is a trained and experienced statistician and researcher.

The PFI web pages will change frequently as the unit becomes more firmly established, and we invite you to visit the site often to stay up to date, or to read published reports. Visit <http://pprc.ums.edu>, and choose Public Finance Initiative from the sidebar. ♥

## NEW PPRC PUBLICATIONS

PPRC regularly disseminates the results of its applied and quantitative research and community and neighborhood development initiatives. All of these reports may be downloaded from the PPRC website. Visit <http://pprc.ums.edu> and select "publications."

Policy Brief 15: The Missouri Structural Budget Crisis, by **Mark Tranel**, Ph.D. Over the past 30 years, there has been a dramatic shift in how people spend their money. Spending on services (medical care, internet, utilities) has increased from 44 to 59 percent of all consumption, while spending on non-durable goods (clothing, food) has declined from 42 to 29 percent. In addition, electronic spending has jumped significantly. Missouri's tax collection structure, however, has not kept up with these changes. This policy brief offers an analysis of the current situation, and alternatives for bringing the system up to date.

Occasional Paper 10: What Makes a Church a Good Neighbor? Findings From Two Studies on Religious Congregations and Community Livability, by **Nancy Kinney**, Ph.D. With more than 300,000 religious congregations in the U.S., public officials are looking to faith-based organizations for help in maintaining and strengthening the social safety net. What is the likelihood that congregations will undertake efforts to address social problems, and are they sufficiently equipped to do so? This paper is a combination of two studies aimed at bridging the gap in knowledge about the pro-social activities of religious congregations

Lessons from Other States for Improving Missouri's Property Tax, by **Steven M. Gardner**. Initially prepared at the request of the Missouri Legislature's Joint Committee on Tax Policy, this report offers an analysis of the essential policies and practices necessary to achieve and maintain equitable property valuation. It also examines the processes other states use to achieve this objective.

What's the Value of Missouri Farmland? Examining the History and Outcomes of the Tax Policy Based on Productive Capacity, by **Steven M. Gardner**. This report describes and explains Missouri's experience with the use of productive valuation rather than market values for taxing farmland. It also provides a comprehensive description of the effects of this policy over the last twenty years.

Survey of Job Openings for the St. Louis Metropolitan Area for May 2005, provided by the Workforce Information System. This survey is conducted bi-annually by the MIDAS unit of PPRC and in partnership with the Center for Advanced Social Research at the University of Missouri – Columbia and the ETC institute. A separate study, Survey of Job Openings in the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area, MO-II: Recreation, Tourism and Hospitality Sector, Summer 2005, also is now available.

### External Publications:

Metromorphosis: Documenting Change, by **Mark Tranel**, Ph.D. and **Larry Handlin**, M.A. This paper illustrates a methodology for exploring revitalization in urban neighborhoods. It presents the methods used and empirical data from PPRC's study of the impact of 55 community gardens in St. Louis. Results have implications for housing values and residential stability in areas with community gardens. This paper is forthcoming this summer in the Journal of Urban Affairs, Volume 28.

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