

## SPECIAL SECTION

# Information About Shaw Special Tax Assessment for Private Patrols

### What is a Special Taxing District (or Special Business District)?

A defined area (such as a neighborhood) that chooses to tax itself, based on the total assessed value of the real property in that area. The money raised is only to be used for specific "public purposes" in that neighborhood.

### How much would it cost?

The tax would be added to a property owner's annual real estate tax assessed and collected by the city. The amount of the special tax is based on a percentage of assessed value. Property owners would pay a different amount, depending on the assessed value of their property.

The city lists assessments on its Web site: <http://stlc.in.missouri.org/assessor/lookup.cfm>

Put in any address and the "assessed total" for that property is listed about half way down the page. Then do the math — that number multiplied by .0050 for the yearly special tax rate. (See chart below for more information).

### How would the funds be used?

The proposal is to use the money primarily to hire off-duty police to provide additional patrols to the neighborhood, as well as use a portion for some neighborhood upkeep such as litter control.

### Who oversees how funds are spent?

By ordinance, the Mayor would appoint an unpaid 7-person Board of Commissioners consisting of Shaw residents

(5 property owners and 2 renters). These seven people, serving 4-year staggered terms, would be responsible for overseeing the funds raised by the tax. By law, the funds raised by the tax can only be spent in Shaw and can only be spent on the specific purposes (ie: security patrols and beautification) as approved by the voters.

### How much security would it buy?

There are many different options that the Board of Commissioners would have to decide from, but a conservative estimate, based on a \$0.50 per \$100 of assessed value tax rate would be 1-3 off-duty police officers for 6-10 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### If we hire off-duty police to patrol the neighborhood, would regular police patrols be reduced or eliminated?

No. State statute specifically requires that the city "shall not decrease the level of publicly funded services in the district existing prior to creation of the district..." Section. 71.799(2) RSMo.

### What area would be affected by the Special Tax?

The Shaw Neighborhood: the borders of which are Grand Blvd. on the east, Tower Grove Ave. on the west, Magnolia Ave. on the south and I-44 on the north. Flora Place would not be included because properties on Flora Place already have a special tax assessment in place.

### What are the next steps?

SNIA will hold a vote of the Board of Directors in August and the General Membership in September. If the Membership supports a special tax, SNIA will approach Alderman Conway to set a public hearing and introduce an ordinance at the Board of Alderman to put the measure on the ballot. If approved by the Board of Aldermen, the issue would be put before voters in Spring 2009, and if passed by a majority of eligible voters in Shaw, the tax would be added onto real estate tax bills at the end of 2009, with the money being distributed to the commission in January 2010.



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Shenandoah & Thurman Aves  
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12 PM - 1 AM

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12 PM - 7 PM

Food served till one hour  
before closing

[www.thurmangrill.com](http://www.thurmangrill.com)

Assessed value	Yearly Special Tax Rate at .0050	(Approximate cost per month)
\$25,000	\$125	\$10.40
\$35,000	\$175	\$14.50
\$45,000	\$225	\$18.75

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# Why I'm in Favor of a Special Taxing District for Shaw

By Sue Raney

The Shaw neighborhood has come a long way in the past decade. Renovation of housing has been rapid, and wonderful people have moved here to be neighbors. Despite the many great changes, too many of our residents still have to deal with crime and nuisance issues. These issues are often street by street. For example, while residents on one block of Russell may experience very few issues with nuisances and criminal behavior, their neighbors two blocks may have an entirely different experience because of the presence of one or two problem properties.

One action to combat the level of unacceptable behavior is the use of a Special Taxing District in Shaw. This involves a tax levied on us, by us, and available for use for Shaw only. The primary use of such a tax would be for private patrols of off-duty police during key hours of crime, and specifically using these patrols to target problem properties and areas in Shaw. Many other neighborhoods near us already have such a thing in place, and tell us it has been successful; Southwest Garden, Forest Park South East, Soulard, Lafayette, and Central West End. Others such as Tower Grove South are well on their way to approving a special tax. And, right in our own neighborhood Flora Pl. has a special tax to pay for private patrols for that street only.

A very small portion of this tax would also go toward the continued litter pick up in Shaw. So far we are depending on a

good year at the art fair to provide funds to keep Shaw from becoming full of trash and litter on our streets. With the special taxing district we could ensure the continuation of this program, which has been in effect for one year now with excellent results, and not have to depend on a yearly event to fund it.

While we can, and should, continue to buy clubs to put on our car steering wheels, get security systems in our homes, call police to check out various behaviors of people and problem properties, and be very aware of those around us as we walk the streets, we also can, and should, do more. The only real way to decrease crime in Shaw is to work to get the criminals to move on and not feel comfortable behaving in a criminal manner here.

Property crimes in Shaw, such as burglary (169 in 2007), larceny (327 in 2007), and auto theft (147 in 2007) are trending up, and are higher than 4 years ago. Robbery is down from 40 four years ago, to 32 in 2007. These numbers, which only represent the minimum of these occurrences since many people do not call the police for stolen items from their cars or windows broken out, is too high for one neighborhood. It is time for those of us who live in Shaw to become pro-active about reducing crime.

The unacceptably high crime rate affects us in so many ways. It decreases our quality of life, from battling problem properties and problem people on our

blocks, to making it difficult to convince good people to buy or rent in Shaw. Crime statistics are readily available on the Internet and makes a serious impact on how our neighborhood is perceived. Our housing values are negatively impacted, and it takes longer to sell a home if the neighborhood does not present well.

We have made 2 full presentations on this issue at the April and May Shaw Neighborhood Improvement Association (SNIA) general meetings. We welcome anyone who wants to find out what this tax is, how it works, how you would be affected, and what it can go toward, to attend future meetings where we will have further discussion about this issue. For those who have not attended the other meetings, we will have people available to explain the Special Taxing District, so no one should feel as if they've lost opportunity to hear more about it.

Coming to block meetings is also a way for us to discuss this issue, and we encourage block captains and residents to call the Shaw Office to set up a meeting with someone who is working on the special taxing district.

Input of Shaw residents is crucial for this sort of undertaking, and we can only encourage people to educate themselves about this possible method of making Shaw a better place to live. It is time for all of us to consider what other tools we can use to improve the quality of life in Shaw.

**Tower Grove Baptist Church offers many youth activities in their expansive recreation facilities, as well as Open Gym for older teens and adults on Wednesday nights from 8 – 10 p.m.; pick-up style basketball where everybody gets to play regardless of skill!**

## SPECIAL SECTION

# Why I'm Opposed to a Special Taxing District for Shaw

By Ron Mueller

Over the past several months we have seen the efforts of a diligent select few who, rightly or wrongly, believe that our next line of defense against crime is to hire private security. To do this, they want to enact a "special tax", paid by the property owners within the Shaw neighborhood, to supplement the STL Metro Police Department that is also being funded by your taxes.

While I applaud their efforts to fight crime, their approach during these hard economic times comes at a time that consumer prices are at an all time high, home sales at record lows, and the double-digit decrease in crime across the city making such an effort ill-timed. Taking more from our already strained pockets while increasing the burden of selling our homes with new taxes attached to each property will only lead to increased foreclosures, less development, and more abandoned building. These are the very things that attract crime, not deter it.

Much can be said on both sides about bringing in "hired guns" to step in where the police cannot but let's review what the proponents have been saying and separate the scare tactics from the truth.

**Claim:** Crime continues to increase creating a need to hire private security to counter this growing threat.

**Fact:** Crime has actually decreased over the past year and is at level comparable to 1974. Chief Joe Mokwa stated, "I'm happy to report that crime is continuing its double-digit decreases," he told Mayor Francis Slay and the other police commissioners. According to his figures, the city hasn't tallied so few reports of crimes since Richard Nixon was president.

Source: *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 25, 2008

Mokwa made a similar presentation at the St. Louis City Board of Alderman meeting, April 2008. A current report of the official crime statistics at [www.slmpd.org/crimestats/CRM0005-C\\_20080501.pdf](http://www.slmpd.org/crimestats/CRM0005-C_20080501.pdf) supports these findings.

**Claim:** With over 1,900 structures within the Shaw neighborhood, there isn't adequate police protect to cover all areas.

**Fact:** Captain Stephen Hobbs, 3rd District Commander briefed Police Chief Mokwa and all senior staff in May 2008 about the success of his programs that have reduced crime over the past year (to see the video please visit [www.stltoday.com/blogzone/the-platform/editorial-writers-notebooks/2008/06/5-minutes-with-st-louis-police-commanders/](http://www.stltoday.com/blogzone/the-platform/editorial-writers-notebooks/2008/06/5-minutes-with-st-louis-police-commanders/)). He specifically addressed the Shaw Neighborhood and reflected on the successes of the program and pledged his continued support in 2008.

Alderman Steve Conway reported during the May 2008 SNIA meeting that with the passage of the new sales tax, Chief Mokwa has committed to increasing the STL Metro force to 1,395 officers.

With crime on the decline and the number of officers on the rise, we should expect more police patrols and a continued decrease in crime thus negating the need for private security.

**Claim:** Other neighborhoods have hired private security with success.

**Fact:** This one gets a little confusing as the proponents for hiring private security keep shifting their position, how security would be enforced, and the measure of

success. We will break down all three of these below

Of the 56 supposed neighborhoods (not a substantiated number) that have hired security, only two are of similar size and actually don't include their entire districts thus making it difficult to actually compare. The majority of the neighborhoods used in their comparison are only a few streets in size with a limited number of houses. To maintain a similar ratio of security-to-people, security-to-structure, or security-to-geographic size, the SNIA would need to hire between 11 and 14 security guards. The current tax increase being proposed would only pay for two.

These same proponents for private security don't exactly say how success was measured. Since the crime statistics don't support their position, they have dismissed them repeatedly as they feel "unreported crime" is much larger. If that is the case, then it is unclear how they measured success. Also missing from this information is other influences that may have factored into to such a decrease. It makes for a nice statement but doesn't hold up under scrutiny.

Proponents for hired security initially billed this as "greater presence" in our neighborhoods with security patrolling the streets of the Shaw Neighborhood. At the June 2008 meeting, their position changed to have private security only on certain streets and to park at known "trouble spots" in an attempt to deter crime. How to determine where these "trouble spots" are and who will make these decisions where security should patrol is unclear but it will be your tax dollars that will support a few special interest people that will

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## REACH 3,500 HOUSEHOLDS FOR AS LITTLE AS \$40!

Shaw is an area of substantial housing and redevelopment — considered one of the most desirable neighborhoods to live in St. Louis.

Your ad in the Shaw Newsletter reaches the residents just east of the Missouri Botanical Garden, west of South Grand, south of I-44 and north of Tower Grove Park. For information on advertising please call SNIA at 314-771-3101.

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# Why I'm Opposed to a Special Taxing District for Shaw

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decide, on their own, who to weed out and who they find undesirable.

While private security has its place, it is neither the time nor place for it now. If we, as neighbors, are truly committed to seeing the continued decrease in crime, then we need to take responsibility for our own actions. A few easy steps will make a difference:

- Install a home security system with fire protection and use a monitoring service.
- Of all the home burglaries in 2008, not one occurred at a home that had an active alarm armed.
- Extend the system to include garages and other out buildings
- The cost of home security is partly off-set by insurance and it can protect while away or even while you sleep at night.
- Keep valuables out of sight and lock your car. Theft is a "crime of opportunity"
- Don't leave anything of value in your car and always lock it, even if it is just for a minute
- Don't leave valuables outside or in plain site
- Have your Block Captain establish working Watch Programs
- Know your neighbors and their schedules/make sure they know yours as well
- Don't give our information about you or your neighbors to strangers; especially hours they are away from home.
- Be the eyes and ears of the police
- If something seems out of place or someone is unfamiliar/acting strangely, call the police (You can be anonymous)

## Comparison of Crime Statistics in Selected City Neighborhoods (2005 – May 2008)

### Property Crime

Neighborhood	2005	2006	2007	Jan-May 2008
Shaw	577	587	653	182
SW Garden	369	349	320	130
Forest Park SE	492	429	351	158
Soulard	461	414	637	105
CWE	2318	2270	1818	563
Tower Grove S.	1386	1466	1220	426
Tower Grove E.	789	931	833	305

### Crimes Against Persons

Neighborhood	2005	2006	2007	Jan-May 2008
Shaw	86	63	60	24
SW Garden	31	45	28	11
Forest Park SE	103	89	85	32
Soulard	67	66	75	28
CWE	201	227	181	56
Tower Grove S.	188	213	195	86
Tower Grove E.	139	142	152	51

### Total Crime

Neighborhood	2005	2006	2007	Jan-May 2008
Shaw	663	650	713	206
SW Garden	400	394	348	141
Forest Park SE	595	518	436	190
Soulard	528	480	442	133
CWE	2519	2479	1999	619
Tower Grove S.	1574	1679	1415	512
Tower Grove E.	928	1073	985	356