

Shawnee YMCA Project Funding and "YMCA TIF" Inquiry: Briefing Document

Request 25-316

6-21-2025

Subject: Review of inquiries and findings regarding the funding of the Shawnee YMCA project, specifically addressing the existence and potential use of a "YMCA TIF" district.

Executive Summary

This document summarizes findings related to inquiries about a "YMCA TIF" district in Shawnee, Oklahoma, concerning the funding of a new YMCA child care facility. No official designation of a "YMCA TIF" district exists in Shawnee's city records, ordinances, or datasets. While the YMCA project is indeed moving forward with significant support, the idea of a specific "YMCA TIF" appears to stem from a misunderstanding or an unofficial term for the potential redirection of general Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds, or other capital improvement allocations, to the project. The use of TIF funds for a 501(c)(3) nonprofit like the YMCA is legally possible but rare and politically contentious. This briefing details the project's known funding, clarifies TIF ordinances, and outlines concerns and recommendations for further investigation.

Main Themes and Most Important Ideas/Facts

1. Absence of an Official "YMCA TIF" District: * Key Finding: Extensive cross-referencing of project folders, Shawnee Minutes, DOGE datasets, city records, and public ordinances reveals no official designation of a "YMCA TIF" district. * This directly addresses the constituent's concern: "SOMEONE" told me in text messages that some of the money the YMCA would be getting is 'YMCA TIFF' money.... No one has ever heard of a 501c3 getting a special TIFF money called 'YMCA TIFF' Advise" * Existing TIF Ordinances: The only official TIF ordinances in Shawnee are the "Downtown TIF (Ord. CS-2017-06)" and the "Industrial Park TIF (Ord. CS-2022-10)."

2. The Shawnee YMCA Child Care Project: * Nature of the Project: The YMCA of Shawnee is partnering with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) and state-level early childhood initiatives to build a child care facility. * Confirmed Funding & Support: * A confirmed "\$1 million grant from OKDHS." * Support from the "Potts Family Foundation and Smart Start Central Oklahoma." * Strong political endorsement from "Mayor Ed Bolt and Rep. Dell Kerbs (R-Shawnee) in strong favor."

3. Potential for TIF Fund Utilization (Despite No Specific "YMCA TIF"): * Hypothesis for "YMCA TIF" Confusion: The "cryptic message from your constituent ('YMCA TIFF money') — indicating either a misunderstanding, an unofficial term, or a redirection of general TIF funds to a YMCA project." * Legal Possibility: "Using TIF money to assist nonprofits (like a YMCA) is legally possible — if the funds are designated for public infrastructure or economic revitalization benefiting a district. However, this is rare,

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and politically contentious." * Unconfirmed Structure: "Nothing confirms this was passed via ordinance, and if such funding was planned or used, it may have been structured under capital improvement allocations or incentive packages, not as a standalone 'YMCA TIF.'"

4. Pros & Cons of Using TIF for a YMCA Project: * Pros: * "Leverages economic development tools for early childhood education." * "Child care infrastructure supports workforce readiness." * "Aligns with public health and education outcomes." * "Potential to qualify under 'blight' or redevelopment criteria." * Cons / Public Concerns: * "Constituents may see this as favoritism toward one nonprofit." * "TIF was traditionally intended to attract private developers/business investment." * "Risk of reduced transparency if project isn't clearly itemized in budget ordinances." * "Erodes public trust if no public discussion occurred or if hidden under vague terms."

5. Recommendations for Further Investigation: * Formal Records Request: Submit a formal request to the City of Shawnee. A draft request is provided, specifically asking for: * Documents referencing or authorizing TIF funds for the YMCA project or using terms like "YMCA TIF," "child care TIF," etc. * Financial records showing allocations, commitments, or distributions from *any* Shawnee TIF district to the YMCA. * Communications between City staff/officials and the YMCA, OKDHS, or Potts Family Foundation regarding funding. * Feasibility studies or legal memos discussing TIF use for the YMCA. * Council/Commission Meeting Review: "Search for all mentions of YMCA or child care in finance/budget meetings since 2021." * Public Clarification: "The City should clarify the origin of all public funds being used for the YMCA facility, including whether any TIF reimbursements or overlays are at play." * Broader Analysis: "You may want to build a section in your Shawnee case study on 'Nonprofit Access to Economic Development Incentives' for broader integrity implications."

Conclusion

While the notion of a distinct "YMCA TIF" district is unfounded, the underlying concern about the source of public funds for the YMCA project, particularly regarding TIF revenues, is valid. The project itself is a significant community initiative supported by state and local figures. To maintain public trust and transparency, it is crucial to formally ascertain whether any existing TIF funds are being utilized for the YMCA and how such allocations are being justified and disclosed within city financial frameworks. The provided formal records request is designed to achieve this clarity.

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