

# Breaking Down the Property Tax Dollar

Whether it's supporting your local police department to offer a safe community or your neighborhood schools to ensure smaller class sizes, property taxes are a necessary investment to making a community what it is. To that end, many Kansas residents are curious as to what their property tax bill generally pays for. Here's a breakdown<sup>1</sup>:



**\$.40 – local school district / \$.29 – local county government / \$.16 – local city government /  
\$.05 – local university or community college / \$.02 – townships / \$.01 cent – state government / \$.07 cents – special districts**

Curious to understand how that 16 cents of every property tax dollar is spent? Here's a look at just a few examples:

- **Maintaining a Qualified Workforce:** Local government is a hands-on industry, requiring cities to deal with common concerns of retaining qualified employees to serve as code enforcers, engineers, and laborers. Considering that municipal workers, on average, earn 12% less than their private sector counterparts, cities can often struggle in retaining needed and qualified employees without appropriate revenue.<sup>2</sup>
- **Filling Potholes and Fixing Roads:** In recent years, nearly 50% of the funding to maintain the local road system has been generated entirely from local governments' budgets. Merely maintaining one mile of our local roads can cost between \$3,000 to \$4,000 annually.<sup>3</sup>
- **Emergency Response:** New fire trucks can cost anywhere from \$500,000 to \$1 million, which in some communities would be the majority of the property tax revenue collected by the city. Alternatively, the cost of a new police car could range anywhere, on average, from \$20,000 to \$50,000 depending on the emergency response and communication technology that is incorporated within the vehicle.

**These are just a few of the areas where you might see your property tax dollars go to ensure that your city services are providing you with a high quality of life.**

#### Sources

1. Kansas Department of Revenue. (2015). Property Taxes & Proportions.
2. Bender, K.A. & Heywood, J.S. (2010). Out of Balance? Comparing Public and Private Sector Compensation Over 20 Years. *Center for State & Local Government Excellence & National Institute on Retirement Security*.
3. Weaver, P. (2014). Closing a Rural Road: Does it Make Economic Sense? *University of Kansas Transportation Center for Road and Bridge Agencies*.