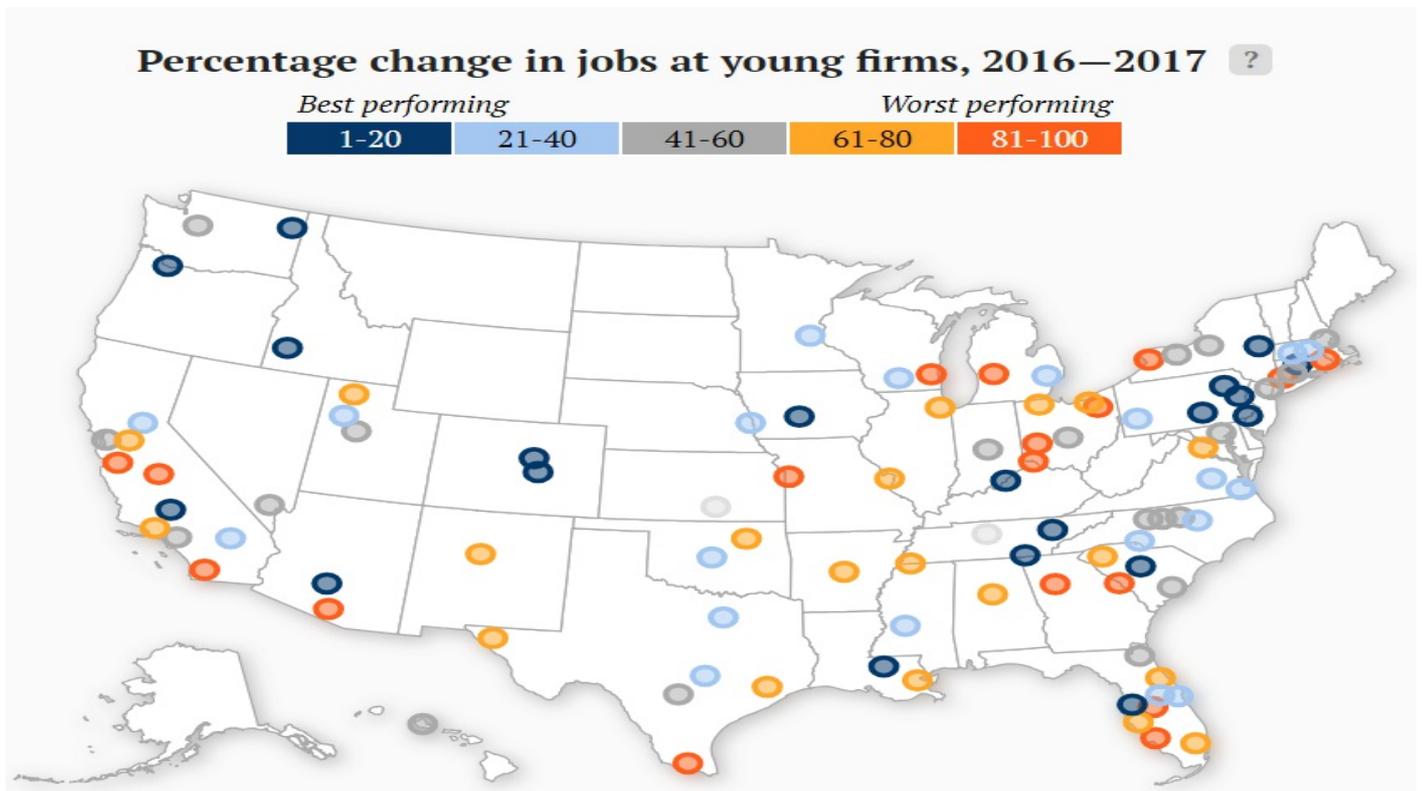




# Missouri's Municipal Failure

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By: *Patrick Tuohey*

According to the Brookings Institution [Metro Monitor 2019](#), per data from 2016–2017, Kansas City ranked 78<sup>th</sup> in economic growth out of the 100 largest metro areas in the United States. St. Louis fared a little better at 69<sup>th</sup>. Kansas City ranked 84<sup>th</sup> in prosperity (measured by productivity, standard of living, and wage growth); St. Louis ranked 52<sup>nd</sup>. Missouri's cities are underperforming.

The Kansas City metro area, despite all the talk about innovation and tech jobs, scored 81<sup>st</sup> in percentage change in jobs at young firms—one of the worst performances in the United States.

Missouri's top cities [spend hundreds of millions of dollars on incentives and subsidies each year](#) in an effort to improve the economy. Exactly what have we gotten in return for all this spending?

[Report after report](#) details exactly how St. Louis and Kansas City have given away such a huge amount in incentives. We've rebuilt downtown Kansas City, [yet haven't grown or created jobs](#) in any meaningful way. In fact, it appears we've actually [overbuilt Kansas City](#). The population of St. Louis [is actually shrinking](#) despite all the investment.

Any reasonable person would look at this and conclude that while these incentives and subsidies may make wealthy developers wealthier, they aren't actually creating very many jobs or doing much to increase investment. That is certainly [what the research says](#).

So why are we still doing it?

## About the Author



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- [2] <https://www.brookings.edu/research/metro-monitor-2019-inclusion-remains-elusive-amid-widespread-metro-growth-and-rising-prosperity/>
- [3] <https://showmeinstitute.org/blog/subsidies/missouri%E2%80%99s-biggest-cities-spend-100-million-annually-just-give-away-money>
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