St. Louis Currents: The Bi-State Region after a Century of Planning

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Mark Abbott
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St. Louis Currents: 
The Bi-State Region After a Century of Planning

Edited by
Mark Abbott
and
Andrew J. Theising
St. Louis Currents: The Bi-State Region After a Century of Planning

Introduction

The more things change, the more they stay the same. That old French proverb might well have been written about the St. Louis region, and this edition of St. Louis Currents proves the point.

Back in 1986, St. Louis Currents was first published by Leadership St. Louis, a predecessor organization of FOCUS St. Louis. Its purpose, both then and now, was to provide a “thoughtful and relevant report about issues and key developments in the metropolitan area.” In creating that inaugural edition, Leadership St. Louis turned to hundreds of community leaders for their first-hand expertise in everything from criminal justice, housing and government to culture, health care, sports and neighborhoods.

Twenty-three years later, this fourth edition of St. Louis Currents is again distinguished by the array of writers, editors and collaborators who expertly present the challenges and opportunities facing our region. This edition looks at the community from the perspective of planning — a fitting theme as the City of St. Louis recently commemorated the 100th anniversary of America’s first comprehensive city plan. That 1907 plan, by the way, was coordinated by the citizen’s league of the day, much as this publication is sponsored by FOCUS St. Louis.

As you read this work, what jumps out is that our community has been wrestling with many of the same themes that were prevalent both in that first edition of Currents and in the 1907 plan as well. Those themes include racial polarization; the fragmented nature of our local government structure; the importance of history in our identity and our community pride; our deep-rooted associations with our neighborhoods and schools; and an enduring spirit that enables the St. Louis region to overcome its differences and find common solutions when external forces threaten.

This publication is not intended to be a thorough review of the region, but rather a critical review of some key successes, failures and concepts that have been a part of who we are and where we are headed. How does history continue to dictate our future direction? What is the current status — and effectiveness — of planning in the region? What defines a good community, whether it is neighborhoods, parks, the riverfront or something more intangible? What are the big decisions we face, how can we implement new and exciting ideas, and what will we look like 100 years from now as a result?

In the 1996 edition of St. Louis Currents, editor Jim O’Donnell wrote: “We do not provide all of the answers. What we do provide is an understanding of how things work and where the resources are in the region. The rest is up to the reader.”

That, too, has not changed.

Christine A. Chadwick
Executive Director
FOCUS St. Louis
About the Author

Christine A. Chadwick is the founding Executive Director of FOCUS St. Louis, a non-profit organization that works to strengthen the St. Louis region by developing leadership, influencing policy, and promoting community connections. She was named the first Executive Director of the organization following the merger between The Leadership Center of Greater St. Louis and Confluence St. Louis in November of 1996. In addition to serving as Executive Director, she also directs the flagship Leadership St. Louis and Experience St. Louis programs and serves as lead consultant/project manager on many customized services for clients such as Pfizer, Commerce Bank, Monsanto, Parkway Schools and others.

Prior to joining FOCUS, Chris operated her own company, CALAB Consulting, specializing in Nonprofit Management, Long Range/Strategic Planning, and Workforce Diversity.

She is one of the St. Louis community’s most active volunteers, having served on the boards of more than 28 community organizations including terms as president of six organizations. Ms. Chadwick currently serves on five local nonprofit boards, one national board, and an additional 12 community boards in an advisory capacity.

Ms. Chadwick has received numerous honors and awards. These include being named a “Woman of Achievement” in 1991 for her impressive volunteer service. She was included in Alive Magazine’s first “Buzz List” in 2006 comprised of people, places and ideas that are putting St. Louis on the map and was named as one of St. Louis’ “Most Influential” by the St. Louis Business Journal in 2007.

She is an adjunct faculty member at Webster University and a graduate of many local and national leadership programs.

A native of Chicago, she and her husband David moved to St. Louis in 1977. They have four grown children and one grandchild.
St. Louis Currents: The Bi-State Region After a Century of Planning

Introduction

At the dawn of the 19th Century, the Corps of Discovery left St. Charles, and began what historian Steven Ambrose called the greatest adventure in American history. St Louis was a small new city whose history was about to be shaped by the recent purchase of the Louisiana Territory by the United States. In their historic journey to the Pacific Ocean the expedition led by Lewis and Clark not only opened the vast promise of the land west of the Mississippi, but also set the future of the river town at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers as a gateway to the west. In the first decades of the 19th century St. Louis was a river town and center of North-South commerce, but was also the last major urban settlement on the route into the frontier.

A century later St. Louis was one of the largest cities in the country, and celebrated its new world-class status with one of the most memorable World Fairs of the 20th Century. At the dawn of the American Century St. Louis was no longer just a starting point for westward expansion, but was a transportation, industrial, and commercial center in the American Midwest. The world of 1907 was the beginning of the modern age. Rail travel across the country was transforming the national economy, and St. Louis was a central hub in the spider web of tracks linking east, west, north, and south. Henry Ford and the Wright brothers were about to further transform the way people and goods were moved across the country. In thirty years St. Louis would also be a vital player in the new transportation modes by building cars and planes. Merchants expanded from outfitting western expeditions and receiving beaver pelts from fur traders to becoming the early 20th century a major manufacturer of shoes, hats, and other clothing.

The distance between the beginning of the 19th and 20th centuries seemed at the time to be larger than the gap between 1907 and the days of the Roman Empire. In that context of unbounded optimism the industrial era seemed about to spawn a century of growth and prosperity for St. Louis, America, and the western world. From this perspective the city plan of 1907 was developed. This document was seen as a blueprint for progress for a city whose best days were ahead.

Little did the planners realize that within a decade the world would be engulfed in a war whose consequences would be felt for the rest of the century with a major economic depression and an even larger world war to follow. At the local level it would be another two decades before community leaders began to appreciate the consequences of the controversial City boundary expansion and related withdrawal from St Louis County. St. Louis City population would continue to grow for half a century, and then begin a steady decline. By the end of the 20th Century, the City of St. Louis would be home to about ten percent of the region's population. The 1907 planners did not envision such a development.

In this latest edition of St. Louis Currents a talented group of scholars, journalists, and community leaders look back to the world of 1907, when city planners produced a vision of the future for the community. What have we collectively learned as a community since 1907? Are there lessons to be learned and applied as we appraise the future of the St. Louis community? The authors collectively share with the reader perspectives on the future of the St. Louis region in its third century. Their analysis recognizes the problems the regional community must address. The optimism of 1907 is tempered a century later by the obvious roadblocks to achievement of the early 20th Century vision of the future.
Several of the authors are members of the St. Louis Metropolitan Research Exchange. This community of scholars represent most of the higher education institutions in the region. In their research members seek to better understand policy, politics, and the dynamics of this urban region. Part of the goal of the Research Exchange is to find ways to share with the larger community the conclusions and perspectives developed by its members. The chapters that follow offer a path and a vision of 21st century St. Louis that extracts the timeless wisdom of the 1907 city plan, and blends that with a realistic assessment of the reasons why that vision was never completely achieved. The St. Louis Metropolitan Research Exchange hopes *St. Louis Currents 2009* will offer a set of ideas and a vision that will engage the community in a collective effort to plan for the future of the region.

Jim Brasfield  
St. Louis Metropolitan Research Exchange
About the Author

Jim Brasfield has been a Professor of Management and Political Science at Webster University since 1976. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Case Western Reserve University, and an MA in Political Science from St. Louis University. He is currently Chairman of the Management Department.

From 1996 to 2002 he was Mayor of Crestwood MO, and previously served on the Board of Aldermen for eighteen years. He was President of the St. Louis County Municipal League in 1991-92, and served on the St. Louis County Board of Equalization from 2005 to 2009. He is currently a member of the St. Louis County Municipal Park Grants Commission.
St. Louis Currents: The Bi-State Region After a Century of Planning

Introduction

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville is very pleased to partner with FOCUS St. Louis to publish the 2009 edition of St. Louis Currents for the region. This volume brings together over two dozen diverse scholars, practitioners, and leaders to address some of the critical issues facing the metropolitan area. It documents key successes and examines areas where the region has fallen short, explaining the paths the region has taken over the last century and pointing a way for the future.

The essays presented here show thoughtful reflection and critical thinking from very talented people. Some are forceful and poignant, others offer very sober assessments, and still others offer new perspectives on familiar issues. All of them add vital perspective to the ongoing challenges facing the metropolitan area.

An exciting feature of this volume is the faithful reproduction of the 1907 City Plan for St. Louis. In that year, St. Louis did something that no other city had done before—it developed a comprehensive city plan using the best thinking of the day. However, it was more than just a compilation of ideas that made the plan important. The plan was a result of a citizen-driven process. The people of St. Louis realized that government alone does not build great places to live, and that citizens must be active members of the metropolitan area. That’s why the Civic League of St. Louis stepped forward to create this visionary document. It is most appropriate that FOCUS St. Louis, the modern regional version of the Civic League, be part of this reconsideration of the 1907 plan.

Today’s world is a very different place. The region has spilled far beyond the boundaries of the central city, the regional population reaches into the millions, and many of the familiar industries of old have given way to new and exciting opportunities. We live very different lives today, but as you will see in this volume, we still share some of the same basic goals and concerns of a century ago.

SIUE has been part of the St. Louis region for over 50 years. As a growing and vibrant metropolitan university, SIUE takes seriously its mission to use teaching, research, and service to advance and disseminate knowledge throughout the region. SIUE’s classrooms are preparing tomorrow’s leaders for challenges yet unknown. SIUE’s faculty and staff work hard to create a learning environment where knowledge freely flows. SIUE’s Institute for Urban Research is one way that the university connects scholarship with the community and its decision-makers.

Dynamic metropolitan areas will always face challenges. It is important that the region stay engaged in discussion of key issues. St. Louis Currents is part of that important discussion and SIUE is proud to help make it possible.

Vaughn Vandegrift
Chancellor
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
About the Author

Dr. Vaughn Vandegrift was appointed the seventh chancellor of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville on July 1, 2004. As Chancellor, Dr. Vandegrift has been instrumental in guiding the University toward fulfillment of its vision to be recognized nationally, as a premier Metropolitan University, for the excellence of its programs and development of professional and community leaders. He has developed a plan for achievement of the vision by the year 2015 that incorporates the values and long-term strategic goals of the University.

Dr. Vandegrift is a New Jersey native who came to SIUE from Georgia Southern University, where he served as Provost, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Chief Information Officer, and Professor of Chemistry. Prior to that, Dr. Vandegrift served as Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics at Montclair State University in New Jersey, Chairman of the Department of Chemistry at Murray State University in Kentucky, and held earlier faculty positions at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois.

Dr. Vandegrift currently serves as a member of St. Louis Civic Progress and as President of the Board of Directors of Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois. In addition, he is a member of the Boards of Directors of University Park, SIUE; Innovate St. Louis; St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association; United Way of Greater St. Louis; the Southern Illinois Collegiate Common Market (SICCM) and the Executive Council of The Alliance of Edwardsville-Glen Carbon. The author of numerous articles and publications in protein/nucleic acid biochemistry, Dr. Vandegrift is a member of the American Chemical Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He has been elected into the honor societies of Omicron Delta Kappa, Sigma Xi, Beta Gamma Sigma and Phi Kappa Phi. He has provided service on boards in support of science education and has been listed in Who's Who in the East, American Men and Women of Science and Who's Who in Frontier Science and Technology.

He received his Ph.D. from Ohio University in Biochemistry and his baccalaureate and master's degrees in Chemistry from Montclair State University.

Dr. Vandegrift and his wife, Sue, are the parents of three adult children. Beth is an attorney, while David and Mark are both employed in private business. In addition, Vaughn and Sue are the proud grandparents of two granddaughters, Vaughn and Camilla, and one grandson, Fletcher.
Chapter 1
The Need for a [Regional] Plan for St. Louis

“Herewith we present for your consideration and approval a plan for the improvement of St. Louis,” Henry Kent, chairman of the General Committee, declared as he opened the 1907 Civic League plan. In keeping with the spirit of the 1907 plan which we are using as a template, we are presenting the following some two dozen essays from some of the best minds in the region “for your consideration.” In this the 4th edition of Currents, we have looked to the 1907 plan, which Christine Chadwick has already noted was the first comprehensive plan in the United States, as inspiration for our authors to think not just about how St. Louis is the way it is, but how it could be. Consequently, we have used the chapters of the original plan to frame this discussion concerning “the improvement of St. Louis.”

While Kent and the myriad of distinguished members of the Civic League’s sub-committees were interested in offering to the citizens of St. Louis a plan for the political city, the theme which binds all of the essays in this edition of Currents is that the whole region is now the real St. Louis. And while the authors in this volume have different ideas about its implementation, they all believe in the need to promote regionalism and the need to forge a common strategy—or a plan—for making the real city operate efficiently as a functional whole.

So just as the opening chapter in the 1907 plan was a manifesto for why St. Louis needed a plan, the essays in this chapter are a declaration for why regionalism, in the words of Henry Kent, is “not only feasible but most desirable.” For our authors, regional fragmentation has made it more and more difficult to address the problems of the real St. Louis—the region. As a result, racial/class tensions, poor education systems, sprawl, etc. threaten to make St. Louis a third tier city. It is clear that they agree with Kent when he said a century ago that “the piecemeal policy which has characterized its past growth can no longer be permitted if this city is to retain her position as one of the great American municipalities.”

What is interesting about the three essays in chapter one, is that purely by chance, they as a group, have almost the identical structure as Kent’s three point defense of a city plan. Similar to Kent’s first point, the first essay by Charles Kindleberger, the former Director of Research for the City of St. Louis, comprehensively describes where St. Louis is today and the challenges it faces. Like Kent, Kindleberger’s purpose is to show that as a region “we have both a range of very serious problems and a set of ‘world class assets.’”

But like Kent in his essay, Kindleberger’s discussion sets up the second essay by Mark Tranel, the Director of the Public Policy Research Center at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. For Kent, while St. Louis was still a major city, “competition between cities is becoming keener all the time” and that “if one city makes itself more inviting than its neighbor, it is bound to attract more people.” In like fashion, Tranel in reviewing metropolitan trends over the past 50 years, concludes that while most measures during the period have been in a negative direction, “a number of demographic, economic, and social indicators that in the early years of the 21st Century have shown improvement in the character and quality of the St. Louis region.” But Tranel’s point, like that of Kent, is that St. Louis will not magically turn around. For him, these indicators will only result in substantive improvement through “deliberative planning.” In fact, Tranel believes that it is impossible for St. Louis to recover its “status as one of the top five urban centers in the United States. But it can influence its destiny.”
For Kent, it was precisely this desire to control its destiny that St. Louis needed a city plan in 1907. As he explained to St. Louisans, “the advantages to be gained from the adoption of a comprehensive scheme are several.” One, it would help prioritize capital improvements. Two, “it will furnish a nucleus around which public sentiment can crystallize.” Three, it will help all St. Louisans realize a “unity of our civic life.” Four, it will “more than all else tend to bring civic orderliness and beauty.” For our third essayist, Ted Shekell, Director of Planning for O’Fallon, IL, Mr. Kent could not have said it better why St. Louis’s future depends upon it embracing regionalism and the drafting of a regional plan. “Communities,” Shekell contends, “who choose to ‘go it alone’ and not engage in cooperative planning efforts with their neighbors, but rather choose to ‘fly solo’ or engage in destructive competition, will invariably find their challenges increasingly difficult to address successfully.” In short, the three essays in Chapter One—just like Henry Kent’s opening letter—are a call to action. While all three essays argue that St. Louis is still a vital and important region, it faces many challenges that can only be faced collectively and with a coherent strategy. “Otherwise,” as Kent maintained a hundred years ago, St. Louis will slide into irrelevancy due to a “lack of unity and an absence of dignity and harmony.”
This chapter attempts to introduce St. Louis with an emphasis on who we are, what we have and what we do. It is an overview that strives to define us, and the variety of things that make us proud, embarrassed, and even ashamed to be “from St. Louis.”

A second purpose is to examine many of the changes that have occurred during the dozen years or so since the last version of *Currents* was published. Some will argue that, on balance, the changes have been limited in comparison with other metropolitan areas. Yet a review of the physical, economic and social accomplishments and events since the mid 1990’s suggests that collectively the changes have been significant, most for the better, some for worse.

A community is shaped, of course, only in part by local activity and events that it can control. Rarely has this been more evident than the beginning of 2009 as a major economic crisis has embraced the country and the world. Examples of this turmoil in St. Louis are widely evident.

- Taylor Morley Homes, Pyramid and other home developers have been forced out of business, while most others have had to severely curtail their activity.
- AG Edwards recently was sold to Wachovia Bank, only to be resold to Wells Fargo, as banks and brokerage services fight to survive.
- Anheuser Busch has been sold to InBev, a brewer headquartered in Belgium and Brazil, and about 1100 employees let go.
- U.S. Steel has idled its Granite City Works, laying off around 2000 employees, as the steel industry attempts to cope with the falling demand.
- Ball Park Village, the Art Museum expansion and many other capital projects are on hold, unable or unwilling to proceed in this unsettled financial environment.
- As many as 24,000 foreclosure filings occurred in the metropolitan area during 2008 with many more anticipated.
Other recessions have occurred since the last version of *Currents* and clearly St. Louis has suffered more than many other metropolitan areas even in the good times. But by most counts this recession seems more foreboding. It will inevitably influence the near and probably mid-term future.

**WHO ARE WE**

When traveling and asked where we are from, the typical response is St. Louis. In actuality we may live in Affton, St. Peters, East St. Louis or one of hundreds of other municipalities (second most, on a per 100,000 population basis, after the Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area), not to mention large swaths of unincorporated areas within most counties. But most of us are proud to identify with St. Louis overall, our heritage, our rivers and our symbols – the Arch, the Cardinals, Toasted Ravioli, home of the 1904 World’s Fair, and all the other familiar clichés.

At the same time we are insular. Many of us are happy to admit that we have not been downtown in years, or conversely that we have little interest in what’s happening in St. Charles or Madison County. We ask people where they went to high school, in part out of genuine interest, but too often as a short hand way to categorize them in terms of some vaguely defined social order. The last dozen years have seen this insularity decrease as our institutions have attracted growing numbers of people from across the country and the world.

The Chapter starts with a look at demography, examining some of the characteristics of the 2.8 million people that make up the St. Louis region. The chapter then looks at some of the highlights of the last dozen years in terms of six categories: the economy, housing, environment, infrastructure, culture, and entertainment. The chapter closes with some reflections on St. Louis as a community.

**DEMOGRAPHY**

This section looks at the metropolitan area and some of changes that have occurred since the mid 1990s. A more comprehensive demographic update would have waited for an additional several years. By 2011, a host of statistics will have begun to be released from the 2010 decennial census. Population estimates will have been checked and new forecasts made. Inevitably some of the estimates in this essay will prove to be wrong.

Dr. George Wendel and his colleagues had a similar problem in the mid nineties, as they prepared the Demographic and other chapters in the 3rd edition of the *St. Louis Currents*. They too depended upon a variety of inter-censal estimates. Yet in several major respects, it is easier this time to get a handle on demographic change. During the 1990s, the Census Bureau decided to drop the traditional long form, substituting instead the American Community Survey (ACS). This approach means that a large sample survey is taken each year with the intent that a variety of socio-economic characteristics are collected. Today estimates are available for large counties for a 2007 time period. By 2010, estimates will be available at the much smaller census tract level. The second significant difference is that this time a lot more information is provided by the Census Bureau, the Missouri Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis and many other sources on the internet.

**Age**

During the past dozen years the St. Louis Metropolitan area has grown older overall and in comparison with other metropolitan areas. The median age was 34 in 1993 and 37.9 in 2007, reflecting aging of the baby boomer cohort, and our slower growth as a region. In comparison
with 34 other metropolitan areas we are the 9th oldest; Pittsburgh at 41.7 is the oldest, followed by Cleveland at 39.

We have relatively few children younger than 5 years. In the St. Louis MSA, 6.6 percent of the population is younger than 5 (31st out of 35 metropolitan areas). Pittsburgh has the fewest young people at 5.4 percent, whereas the average for the largest 35 metro areas is 7.3 percent.2

Households

Over the last 15 years the number of households has increased faster in the region than overall population growth – 17 percent versus 13.7 percent. This reflects life style preferences and general prosperity as kids leave the nest, families get divorced and/or elderly parents continue to live independently. Today, only 66.4 percent of the households are traditional families where 2 or more related individuals live together; in 1990 the number was 70 percent. The other third are single persons living alone or with roommates.

A subset of households have a particular challenge: those with kids that are headed by single parents. St. Louis is about average among other metropolitan areas with just over a quarter of the families (26.5 percent) headed by a single parent. The range is broad: 37.3 percent in Memphis all the way to 21.6 percent in Minneapolis.3

Income

The Census Bureau’s most recent estimate of median household income for the St. Louis area is $52,465. It is important to consider this number in terms of purchasing power. When adjusted for cost of living differences in various metropolitan areas, St. Louis has a 2005 median income of $51,152 – which ranks 11th among 35 metropolitan areas. This compares very favorably to more expensive areas such as Los Angeles ($22,440), San Francisco ($15,626), and New York ($14,016).4

During the first half of this decade (2000 – 2005) household income in St. Louis grew somewhat faster than the average for the 35 largest MSAs (9.4 percent vs. 8.0 percent).5 As one would expect the mean or average income per St. Louis household is higher at $68,373, than the median.6

Needless to say there is a wide variation in the distribution of income. Of the 1,094,000 households in the metropolitan area, 253,000 (23 percent) made less than $25,000 in 2006, whereas 208,000 (19.1 percent) of the households made more than $100,000. At the very low end, 75,000 households (considerably more than could fit in Busch Stadium) made less than $10,000.7

Poverty levels are calculated by the federal government based on the size of the family, the number of children, and (for one and two person families) the age of the head of household. At 8.1 percent the St. Louis area has fewer families in poverty than many other MSAs. The range in 2005 was between 14.9 percent in Memphis and 5.6 percent in Minneapolis.8 All told 302,000 people (11 percent) in the St. Louis area were estimated to have been in poverty during 2006. About a third of these (108,000) were children under 18. Five percent (137,050) were estimated to be living in households with income less than half of the poverty rate.9

Interestingly, St. Louis has a somewhat lower percent of household income based on salaries and wages, and a higher percent based on dividends, interest, and rent. This may reflect a relatively large amount of inherited wealth, given earlier generations of prosperous St. Louis families, social security, given the size of the elderly population, and the high percent of home ownership, many of which are rented.10
Migration

The St. Louis metropolitan area is a large, but relatively slow growth community. Unlike Phoenix (18.9), Austin (16.2), Atlanta (15.8) and other MSAs in the south and west, St. Louis grew at a modest 3 percent between 2000 and 2005. In part, this reflects the relative lack of attraction on the part of immigrants. In the first half of this decade, we had one third of the immigrants on a per 10,000 person basis than the average MSA (399 per 10,000 versus 1,209 per 10,000). Still, like Americans everywhere, we move a lot. The 2007 American Community Survey estimates that 13.7 percent of those of us one year and older moved in the previous year, some 380,000 people. More than half of those people moved within the same county, while almost 100,000 moved from one county to another; for example, from St. Louis County to the City or St. Charles, or vice versa. The remaining 63,000 (2.3 percent of the total) lived in another state the year before. No doubt a good number of these people simply moved across the river.

Even more powerful evidence of our restless nature is evident in the ACS estimates as to when people moved into their current dwellings. Of the 1,095,000 occupied housing units in the region, more than half (575,000 units) were occupied by a new household since 2000.

Education

The St. Louis area has slightly fewer educated people than average for other metropolitan areas – 10.2 percent versus 11.3 percent with advance degrees; 28 percent versus 31.3 percent with bachelor’s degree. There are many other areas with less educated citizens, yet some other areas (Washington DC, Boston, New York, San Francisco, etc.) have dramatically higher numbers.

Our educational spending is about normal ($9,800 versus an average $9,500 per pupil for 34 metropolitan areas. But our pupil to teacher ratio (15.2) is reported to be bottom among areas. Impressively, the percent of children under five enrolled in preschool (28.1) is second only to Atlanta.

How to summarize? In general, it would seem that we are pretty similar to other metropolitan areas, especially those in the middle of the country. We seem to be a little older (fewer kids, more seniors), a little less educated, and less affluent (though we do well in terms of the cost of living).

We have somewhat higher levels of cancer, obesity and smoking, but lower levels of AIDS/HIV and diabetes. Disabilities are a reality for many. Among the non-institutionalized population
over five, 15 percent are estimated to have a disability, a number that is understandably much higher at 39 percent for people over age 65. Fortunately, while we are 6th out of 35 metropolitan areas in terms of people per 100,000 with disabilities over 65, we are 27th as to the percent (17.7) of those with disabilities that live in poverty.

Demographic indicators are, of course, only one crude way to understand a community. Another is to look at the quality of its institutions, environment and opportunities for a decent place to work, live and relax. At the individual level, obviously life has gotten better for some and worse for others over the last dozen years. At the aggregate level, a case can be made for progress in St. Louis, reflecting a committed investment on the part of many in the community.

CULTURE

Given our 240 year history, and relatively high levels of affluence among influential community minded families dating back to the 19th century, it is not surprising that many St. Louis cultural resources are first rate. Public support, at least from the City and St. Louis County, has also been very important. The Metropolitan Zoological and Museum District (Zoo-Museum district) brings in roughly $68 million in annual tax revenues for distribution to the Zoo, Art Museum, Science Museum, History Museum and Botanical Garden. First approved in 1972, it has been envied, and emulated, by many communities around the nation. Also the Regional Arts Commission (RAC) receives annual funding based on a 3.75 percent tax on hotel rooms in the City and County (11/15ths goes to the Convention and Visitors Bureau and 4/15th to RAC). Since the mid 1980s, RAC has distributed around 5000 grants to local non-profits amounting to some $65 million.

Complementing public support is a host of voluntary efforts led by the Arts and Education Council. This non-profit was created in the early 1960s when United Way decided to focus primarily on human service concerns. The Council’s goal is to receive $4 million annually for distribution to Arts groups.

There have been many impressive contributions to the cultural scene over the last dozen years. Some are listed here; others in the section on entertainment.

- City Museum: In 1997, long time sculptor Bob Cassilly opened a museum in the annex to the International Shoe building at 15th and Lucas. Defying easy description, this interactive, exploratorium has become a must see destination for children and their families. Project for Public Spaces in New York named the museum as one of the “Worlds 10 best public spaces” in 2005.

- City Pulitzer: Emily Pulitzer was the widow of the former publisher of the Post-Dispatch and a long time art collector. In 2001, she created a museum, designed by renowned architect Tadao Ando, located on Washington, near Spring in the Grand Center area.

- Contemporary: A new location for the St. Louis Contemporary Art Museum was established in 2003 immediately west of the Pulitzer. The 27,000 sq. ft., $6 million building was designed by Brad Cloepfil of Allied Works Architecture of Portland, Oregon.

- Regional Arts Commission: With help from a community improvement district, and $3 million in tax exempt bonds, a four story building was constructed in 2003 across
from the Pagent on Delmar. In 2008 the Commission awarded almost $3,600,000 in grants to more than 200 non-profits, as well as providing a volunteer program (Art Commandos), technical assistance (Community Art Training Institute), an arts calendar (Artzipper) and more.

• University Museums: In 2004, the Washington University Gallery of Art was renamed the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum. Two years later it moved from Steinberg Hall into a 65,000 sq ft. building designed by Pritzer Prize winning architect Fumiho Make, all as part of the Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts. In the spring of 2002 the Museum of Art at St. Louis University moved into a renovated French revival mansion on Lindell (built as the St. Louis Club in 1900) that had served most recently as O'Donnell Hall. The 55,000 sq. ft. building houses a rich array of permanent and rotating exhibits.

• Zoo Museum District Institutions: In recent years the St. Louis Zoo has continued to invest in its 77 acre facility. The River's Edge, Insectarium, Penguin and Puffin Coast, Edwin K. Love Conservation Foundation Cypress Swamps (renovated bird cage) and the Don and Marilyn Lipton Fragile Forest are examples of recent projects that ensure continuing recognition of the zoo as one of the best in America. In 2000, the Missouri History Museum completed the Emerson Center, a large expansion with a glass façade on the southern exposure. This “green” expansion to the original 1913 Jefferson Memorial building has contributed an auditorium, classrooms, a restaurant, and gift shop, as well as additional exhibit space. Improvements have also been made over the last dozen years at the Botanical Garden, the Science Museum, and hopefully soon the Art Museum.

• Gateway Mall Urban Garden: A major new sculpture garden is now under construction between 8th and 10th Streets in downtown’s gateway mall, the 1.2 mile park between the Old Court House and Union Station. Made possible by the Gateway Foundation, this $20 million investment will include 20 -25 sculptures, as well as plantings, fountains, lighting and a café.
ECONOMY

The 2007 American Community Survey reports that of the metropolitan population over 16, just over two thirds of us (67.1 percent) are in the labor force, with all but 6.7 percent of those employed. That relatively small percentage still adds up to all most 100,000 people, and, of course, that number has been rapidly growing. The latest estimate reported by Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) for January 2009 was 133,239 unemployed (9.2 percent of the labor force), which was about 41,000 more than the year before (91,797 or 6.3 percent in January 2008). These numbers do not speak to the discouraged workers who have given up looking and those working part time who would like to be working full time.

We work in diverse industries. Eleven percent of us in manufacturing (157,000 people), 15 percent in wholesale or retail trade (209,000), 9.6 percent in professional, scientific, management and administrative (132,000) and so on. The old stereotypical view of St. Louis (First in shoes, first in booze, last in the American league) as a heavy industry center no longer fits. A changing economy is very much the order of the day.

One way to examine this change is to look at the “Book of Lists” put out by the St. Louis Business Journal in 2008 versus 1997. Consider the list of largest employers, and the number of names that have changed.

- McDonnell Douglas was 1st on the list with 22,000 employees in 1997. By 2008 it had transformed into the Boeing Integrated Defense Systems Division with 16,000 employees, and a home office in Chicago. In its place as number 1 was BJC with 23,000 employees.

- Southwestern Bell has become ATT but without a major impact on St. Louis employment (around 9000 both years). Interestingly, in the summer of 2008 the company announced it would move its corporate headquarters from San Antonio to Dallas, just as it had in the early 90s from St. Louis to San Antonio.

- TWA which was 9th on the list with 8,100 employees was no longer a sizable presence in St. Louis, having been purchased by American Airlines and losing its hub status.

May Company (7,600 people in 1996), Boatman’s (5,300 in 96), Chrysler (4,700 in 96), Olin (4,000 in 96), and Maritz (3,600 in 96) had all dropped from the list, either because they had been purchased by other non-St. Louis companies, or had reduced their work force or both.

A useful reflection of the economy is evident in the state of the commercial real estate market, and in comparison with other parts of the country, St. Louis has done relatively well.

Office Space

In 2007 office space absorption amounted to 1.5 million square feet, causing a drop of the vacancy rate to 11 percent, despite an increase in “inventory” (new space) of 830,000. The good news continued during the first 9 months of 2008. Apparently only several thousand of the jobs lost during 2008 were in office space using industries. During those 9 months, 786,000 additional sq. ft were absorbed, and inventory increased by 457,000 sq. ft. Seven new office buildings were in
construction during 2008 that totaled 680,000 in new space. Of course, there was wide variation in different parts of the region: Downtown— with 62 Class A and B office buildings—had a vacancy rate of 20 percent, whereas Clayton (73 buildings), West County (271 buildings), and St. Charles County (83 buildings) had respective vacancy rates of 7.9, 7.8 and 7.6 percent.

Industrial Space

The development of industrial space has also done well. In the fall of 2007, Expansion Management Magazine ranked St. Louis second as the most “logistics friendly” metropolitan area in the country. Our absorption numbers have been impressive: 1,787,000 sq. ft. in 2007, 1,842,000 in 2006, and 2,871,000 in 2005. Demand was especially strong for “bulk buildings” — those with 40,000 to 100,000 sq. ft., high ceiling clearances, efficient loading docks and less than 10 percent office finish. Fourteen office/warehouse buildings, totaling 900,000, were under construction during 2008, collectively enhancing the region’s ability to compete for large distribution centers.

Retail Space

In the aggregate, retail activity has also done well in recent years. Enclosed malls are no longer as popular as they once were, and now have to compete with “power centers”, “big boxes”, “outlet malls”, “life style centers”, and plain old store fronts along the street. The area has been helped by the renewed interest in things urban which has helped the City of St. Louis, some inner suburbs like Maplewood and University City and several older outlying cities. However, most retail interest continues to be suburban – Meadows at Lake St. Louis (500,000 sq. ft.), Manchester Highlands (521,000 sq. ft.) at Manchester and Highway 141, Fountain Plaza (170,000 sq. ft.) in Ellisville, Crescent Point (125,000 sq. ft., a hotel and restaurants) next to St. Louis Mills Mall, and Belleville Commons (410,000 sq. ft., in first phase). In the later half of 2008, many consumers finally curtailed their buying. National chains (e.g. Circuit City, Linens and Things, etc.) and local stores felt the heat, and prospects for commercial activity in the near term became very bleak.

Technology Intensive Companies

In 1997, The Danforth Foundation shifted its focus from national education to community revitalization in St. Louis. Over the next 6 years some $300 million was directed towards community non-profits, programs and events. Then in January 2003, the foundation decided to narrow its focus, reduce its staff (from 8 to 2) and to commit $117 million towards “plant and life sciences” development in the region. The Donald Danforth Plant Science Center and the Coalition for Plant and Life Sciences, as formed by the Regional Commerce and Growth Center, were primary beneficiaries. But so too were companies like Monsanto, non-profits like the Center for Emerging Technologies and Cortex, and local universities. Though small in comparison with the effort in some other regions, and without much in the way of state support, this effort and others like it can lead the way towards a more post industrial and competitive economy.

ENVIRONMENT

Those who are relatively new to St. Louis may not appreciate the dramatic environmental changes, both urban and rural, that have occurred over the past 12 years. Consider the following:
• Redevelopment Activity: Portions of the city and the inner suburbs have continued to experience disinvestment, a process that may intensify in this new era of high foreclosures and tax delinquency. Yet neighborhood after neighborhood has benefited from intensive rehabilitation and even new construction since the last Currents. Encouraged by historic preservation tax credits, community development block grant, TIF and other incentives, combined with rising home values and especially large numbers of people anxious to experience city living, this movement has been more pronounced than any time since the fifties.

• Public Housing: In the mid 1990s, complexes like Cochran Gardens (north of downtown), Vaughn (north east), Darst-Webbe (south) and Blumeyer (near Grand Center) remained largely as they had for the previous 30 years – inhospitable, semi-abandoned, foreboding, and sometimes dangerous. Especially troublesome were the high rise complexes that, despite periodic renovations, echoed the failed Pruitt Igoe development, if at a somewhat smaller scale. Together they, and other low rise sites like Clinton Peabody and Carr Square, cast a pall on the downtown area. In the last dozen years this has all changed. Led by McCormack, Barron, Salazar, with the help of Federal government’s Hope VI program and other subsidies, these Stalinesque sites have been transformed into dramatically more attractive, sustainable mixed income neighborhoods.

• Parks and Trails: In 1993 a new mayor (Freeman Bosley Jr.) was elected and a capital improvement sales tax was approved by City voters; in 1995 a new plan for Forest Park was endorsed by the Planning Commission. The stage was set to finally begin a large scale rebuilding program in the region’s most important park. As of the fall of 2008, more than 100 million dollars had been spent, approximately half by the City of St. Louis and half by corporations and individual donors to the Friends of Forest Park. Few disagreed that Forest Park had been restored to its place as one of the great urban parks in North America. Also of great importance was the passage of Proposition C in November 2000 that created the Great River Greenway District to be funded with a 1/10\textsuperscript{th} of 1 cents sales tax. Their vision of a 600 mile “web” of greenways, made possible with some 45 implementation projects, holds the promise of dramatic improvements in our quality of life.

• Flood Plains: In the late sixties, the St. Louis County Planning Department issued a conceptual report where by almost all the Missouri river flood plain in the county would be developed. Earth City, the industrial park immediately north of I-70 was approved in 1970 (the year Earth day was first celebrated) by the County Council. Development continued with Riverport, an office park, outdoor concert facility and gambling venue just south of I-70. The great flood of 1993 flooded most of the bottoms with 8 to 10 feet of water, but it seems to have only encouraged local officials and the Corp of Engineers to build more. The Monarch District levee rebuilt the levee to 500 year specifications, and soon Chesterfield Commons (which some have called the largest strip mall in the country) took shape – some 1.3 million sq. ft of “big box” retail, restaurants and shops. Further downstream, the Mills Mall was built in Hazelwood, as well as a sizable distribution complex. Plenty of other flood plain protection and development
issues have characterized the Mississippi River on both sides of the metropolitan area.

**HOUSING**

A lot of homes were built in the St. Louis MSA during the last dozen years. Roughly 104,000 homes were built between 2000 and 2007; Harder to monitor are the sizable number of dwellings renovated after being uninhabitable or previously used for commercial or industrial purposes.26

**Sprawl**

Dramatic redevelopment activity occurred in the city and some inner suburbs. Until the recent collapse there were few Class C office buildings in downtown that had not been converted into housing or were somewhere in the conversion process. Washington Avenue and adjacent streets became a lively residential neighborhood. But the boom occurred in many other neighborhoods as well – the West End, Dog Town, the Gate District, Forest Park South East and many more became hot neighborhoods in which to buy a new or renovated home. Maplewood was rediscovered, and upscale condominiums exploded in and around Clayton.

But the rediscovery of urban neighborhoods as desirable places to live, hardly slowed the rush to build in suburbia. Traditional subdivision building was supplemented with larger projects like New Town and Winghaven in St. Charles. Growth remained a symbol of success, home builders had considerable political clout, and the demand for suburban/exurban living remained high for families looking for newer, less expensive housing in areas with better schools and less diverse neighborhoods. Despite serious reservations expressed by the St. Louis Municipal League, and then city Mayor Clarence Harmon, about the impact of the Page Avenue bridge on sprawl, suburban and exurban expansion has continued. On the Missouri side of the river, for example, 73.9 percent of the building permits issued for single family homes between 2000 and 2008 were in counties other than the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County (44,755 of 60,568 permits).27

**Foreclosures**

In the mid decade (2002 – 2007) sub-prime, Alt A and Jumbo loans increasingly fed a worldwide demand for securities backed by mortgages. Most of these loans only worked if home prices continued to go up, allowing the homeowner to refinance
when the adjustable rates went up. Of course, (in retrospect) they didn’t. Finally, the world realized that many of these loans were not going to be paid back. The party was over.28

St. Louis is in better shape than many other markets, but the pain is still severe, and it is not evenly distributed. The St. Louis Post Dispatch reported foreclosure filings (more than completed foreclosures) for the MSA in February 2009 as 2341 in comparison with 2794 filings in February 2008.29 Even with lenders selling foreclosed homes at an average price of 50 to 60 percent of their previous price, the inventory of foreclosed and vacant homes has grown, dramatically in certain sections of the City and north St. Louis County. Most of these are relatively small (1200 square feet plus or minus) single family homes built in the 1950s.

The $3.9 billion dollar national stabilization program passed in 2008 will provide about $17 million dollars to counties in the metropolitan area. These funds are designed to allow local governments to purchase, renovate or demolish and sell or rent foreclosed homes. This program may make a difference in targeted areas, but the expectation is that only 10 to 15 percent of the foreclosures can be addressed. Neighborhoods that have experienced large numbers of foreclosures are likely to take a long time to recover their previous values.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

Investments in transportation, sanitary and storm water sewers, levee systems, and other large scale projects are complicated in St. Louis. Large rivers need to be bridged, and during times of flood, resisted. Viaducts, sewers, schools and parks are often antiquated. Residential sprawl drives demand for new infrastructure in outlying areas. The State of Missouri has less infrastructure money than Illinois, as much of it is oriented to the rural sections of the state.

Yet in recent years there have been major, often controversial projects such as:

- Metro: Formerly the Bi-State Development Agency, Metro expanded the light rail system to Clayton and Shrewsbury, using local monies, and at a cost of a $136 million overrun.30 Following the failure to pass a sales tax increase in St. Louis County in November 2008, Metro announced the need to raise fares, and cut bus services by 42 percent, metrolink service by 32 percent and disabled rider service (Call a Ride) by 15 percent.
• Bridges: They were constructed (Page Avenue over the Missouri), renovated (McKinley over the Mississippi) and planned (new Mississippi bridge just north of downtown), the latter after a protracted debate between the two states.

• I-64 (Route 40): The Missouri Department of Transportation initiated a roughly half billion dollar improvement between Kingshighway on the east and Spoede on the west. This huge project has been controversial because of the decision to close large segments of the highway over a two year period.

• Airports: In the early 70’s, in an event that illustrated our fractious local governments, a decision was made to expand Lambert International Airport, rather than build a new airport in Waterloo, Illinois. Since then large swaths of surrounding communities have been purchased and cleared to enable the expansion. In 2006 a new billion dollar runway was completed. Unfortunately, the loss of TWA and its hub status, translated into a loss of roughly 15 million annual passenger emplanements (30,560,000 in 2000 to 15,200,000 in 2006) and a new runway that is rarely needed. Meanwhile in the spring of 1998 Mid-America St. Louis Airport opened adjacent to Scott Air Force Base in St. Clair County. With a 53,000 sq ft. passenger terminal and substantial cargo capability, the airport has been a source of considerable frustration, as one carrier after another has failed to find success.

Infrastructure can take a long time. Perhaps no project illustrates this better than the history of the St. Louis Multi-Modal Center. About 20 years ago, Congressman Gephardt helped obtain $20 million for construction of a downtown station that could bring together local bus and light rail service, inter city bus service, taxis, with connection to Amtrack rail service and the airport. After years of debate over location, design and funding, the complex was finally completed in the fall of 2008 at a cost of $31.4 million. Just west of 14th street and south of the Scott Trade Center, the Gateway Multi-Modal Transportation Center means that Greyhound riders no longer need to embark at Cass and Tucker, and rail passengers no longer need to use the “temporary” station, long known as Amshack.

ENTERTAINMENT

There are plenty of ways to spend one’s entertainment dollar in St. Louis. Traditional options now compete with gambling, video arcades like Dave and Busters, and paint ball sites. New restaurants and sports bars come and go. Retail and leisure time preferences continually change. Here are a few of the changes in recent years.

Sports

St. Louis is a sports town: professional baseball, football, hockey and college basketball. (The professional St. Louis Hawks left town in 1968 and have never been replaced). Many would agree that we are fortunate to have the venues for the professional sports teams in downtown St. Louis thereby contributing visitors and commerce into the heart of the region. Other jurisdictions have competed to be the location for new stadiums, but the reality is that the City, the
County and the State have cooperated to get the new Edward Jones Dome (1995) and the new Busch Stadium (2006) built in downtown. The football stadium was built with the idea that it could complement the Convention and Visitors Bureau, and help attract a new football team. The baseball stadium was built when the new owners, led by decided that the 1967 Edward Durrell Stone stadium was obsolete.

Other new sports venues constructed in recent years include the Chaifetz Arena on the St. Louis University Campus (10,600 seats, 16 suites and a large club, serving Billiken basketball), minor league baseball fields (T.R. Hughes Field, home to the River City Rascals (with 3500 permanent seats and picnic grounds) in the Ozzie Smith Sports Complex in St. Charles County, and GCS Park, home of the Gateway Grizzlies (with capacity for 6000 fans) on Interstate 255 between I-64 and Columbia, Illinois. Public Golf courses have also been re-constructed in Forest Park (3 nine-hole courses designed by Hale Irwin Golf Services) and more recently at the Triple AAA golf and tennis facility.

Gambling

A major splash in terms of entertainment options during recent years has been the advent of gambling. Venues include: Alton Belle in Alton, the Casino Queen in East St. Louis, the Ameristar in St. Charles, Harrah’s in Maryland Heights and, the latest, Lumière Place immediately north of Laclede’s Landing in downtown. A casino south of the city on the former national lead site is anticipated soon. A location just north of I-270 on the Missouri side of the Mississippi River may possibly become the home of the President (formally the Admiral, a long time fixture on the downtown riverfront.)

Riverboat gambling was approved by voters in a 1992 referendum, and modified throughout the 1990s to allow slot machines (originally only “games of skill”, not “games of chance” were allowed) to allow dockside stationing, and, in 1998, to allow so called “boats in a moat” (stationary structures built in basins containing water not more than 1000 feet from a river.) The most recent change to the law was a constitutional amendment approved in November 2008 that would remove the $500 loss limits, thereby allowing a gambler to lose as much as he or she liked in as short a time as desired. The measure also curtails additional casinos. St. Louis area casinos were reported to have earned approximately $90 million in the month of July 2008. The impact of the recession on gambling is not yet clear.
Performance Venues

Amid some controversy over its cost, the Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center was constructed in 2003 on the University of Missouri-St. Louis Campus. With two theaters (the 1625 seat Anheuser-Busch Theater and the smaller E. Desmond and Mary Ann Lee Theater) and a variety of ancillary spaces, the $52 million facility is designed to serve the students, faculty and the community. A second large venue, the Pageant opened in 2000 on Delmar, just east of Skinker. Despite a capacity of 2000 people, it can be crowded, and, according to some posts on sites like Citisearch, less than friendly. On the other hand, Pollstar, the site that calls itself the Concert Hotwire, ranked the Pageant number 4 among “Top Club Venues in the World.”

Performing Arts

Although it has a rich history (e.g. Scott Joplin, Chuck Davis, Miles Davis, Jonnie Johnson, Ike and Tina Turner, etc.) St. Louis doesn’t have the musical reputation of Memphis or New Orleans. However, St. Louis is blessed to have a symphony that despite past money and labor problems remains on many top 10 lists in the country, and an Opera Theatre that is highly respected. There is also the Union Avenue Opera and, since 2007, the New Opera Company. Yelp, the web site devoted to local reviews and social networking, lists some thirty performing arts sites and events – the Fox, Muny, Japanese Festival, Shakespeare Festival, Black Repertory, Dance St. Louis and many more. The St. Louis Concert Web, RTF and Live Music in St. Louis, MO are among those web sites that highlight the diverse musical scene.

SUMMARY

How does one characterize St. Louis? The old standards are shop worn, pointing to a different era. “St. Louis: a city known for its southern efficiency and northern charm” or a “community not sure if it belongs in the south, the north, the east or the west.” Bring a group together to discuss the town, and, like as not, there will be expressions of insecurity or doubt and/or envy of other places, but also pride, and a general recognition that many of us have it pretty good.

For some there is the sense that our prominence has passed us by – that, for what ever reasons, the action today is in southern cities like Atlanta, southwest cities like Phoenix or cities on either coast. Some would argue that highly unionized work force has complicated transformation to a post-industrial economy. Others stress our racist history stemming all the way back to 1820 when Missouri entered the union as a slave state, though St. Louis itself had union sympathies. Some speak to the lack of committed leaders, willing to take risks, be held accountable, and not be stymied every time “five people with placards” show up. Still others point to the purchase of our banks and manufacturing companies by national and international companies, and the subsequent replacement of St. Louis bred CEOs with transitional branch managers who have neither the time nor inclination to devote themselves to the community.

It is not hard to find comparative lists that highlight desirable quality of life in the region. Some can be subjective and used in a self serving way, but they often display aspects of truth. These lists illustrate our relative supply of affordable housing, that we have nothing in the way of traffic jams in comparison with other regions, and that by and large we have great cultural, entertainment and educational institutions. We even have plentiful, extremely clean drinking water.

The reality is, of course, that we have both a range of very serious problems, and a set of “world class” assets. If there are no oceans or mountains, nevertheless, there is, in the parlance of
Richard Florida, a growing “creative class” – people who are attracted to a community because of its “technology, talent and tolerance.”

For those who would say it has been mostly downhill since the 1904 World’s Fair, consider the improvements made in recent years, and documented by columnists like Neil Pierce. For those who worry that we lack the energy, drive and fierce desire to “win” in comparison with other metropolitan areas, look at the FOCUS St. Louis list of “what’s right with the region” awards in recent years to remind yourself of the many individuals and groups that are serious about making a difference. Or consider the pattern of philanthropy in St. Louis. David Loukes, president of the St. Louis Community Foundation reports that corporations on average contribute 3 times the national average to charity, and that households contribute at a 15 percent higher rate than the country. The United Way has consistently raised more than $60 million annually, placing us 6th among United Ways across the country, despite our 18th standing in population size. Especially impressive is the 1st place standing among African American contributors and 5th place standing among women contributors.

For those who lament our fractured governments and our difficulties in reaching regional consensus, there are others who continue to explore pragmatic, inter jurisdictional solutions.

There have been plenty of cynics: Charles Dickens, Lincoln Steffens, Ernest Hemingway, Tennessee Williams all found nasty things to say. In the 1970s, Professor Stephen Darst thought of St. Louis as “never what it thinks it was; things now are probably not as bad as they appear. But old cities, like old families, obviously shabby, presumptively genteel, sustain themselves on dreams of vanished grandeur, and it may be better to leave such dreams intact.”

Darst characterized St. Louis as having a “peculiar local fantasy” – “that central location is of increasing importance, that rivers are on the way back and the Middle West is becoming big box office, that our summers grow longer and greener and cooler, and that if only we can brew a little faster, stretch out our city limits a little farther, we will wake again to the summer of 1904, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the greatest fair ever held…”

More recent self analysis can be found in the columns of Bill McClellan who insightfully puts down the many boosters among us. For example, a recent column concerning a new coach for the Rams football team lamented that our baseball manager doesn’t want to live here, seeing himself as “a midnight guy in a nine o’clock town.” McClellan reminds us that we “are not barbarians. We don’t chill the Merlot. We don’t let the farm
animals into the house at night, at least not into the bedroom.” He speaks for many of us when he suggests that “the last thing we need is a football coach who acts like an A-list guy stuck in a B-list city. For these last few years of football, I want a coach who wants to be here.”

For the visitor who hasn’t been in town since the last version of *Currents* was published there is a lot to see: Visit Forest Park, Delmar east of Skinker, the former sites of Blumeyer, Darst Webbe, Vaughn and Cochran public housing and more. Take in the investment that has and is happening in and around our universities and colleges, our health complexes and so many of our neighborhoods and subdivisions. St. Louis may be on the “B-List” and it clearly continues to have major challenges, but for most of us it is a great place to live.
Endnotes
1. These and other examples in this chapter are drawn mainly from the St. Louis Post Dispatch, the St. Louis Business Journal, miscellaneous reports and numerous web sites. Several sources of information have proved particularly useful in thinking about change in recent years.

   East-West Gateway Council of Governments, Where We Stand: The Strategic Assessment of the St. Louis Region, 5th Ed, 2006. This valuable series was initiated in 1992. It compares some 30 to 35 metropolitan areas in terms of about 80 distinct variables.


   University of Missouri Extension, Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis. This organization provides census profiles and extensive additional information at the city, county, metropolitan area and state level.

   US Census Bureau, especially estimates based on the American Community Survey.

   Special thanks go to Stephanie Thomas, of the Institute for Urban Research at SIU-Edwardsville, who has assisted on this chapter, especially with the tables. Thanks also to Joe Zanola of Market Graphics for building permit information and Mark Drucker for his review of the draft. Given the ease of internet retrieval, footnotes have not been recorded for most web sites relating to specific projects and organizations.


7. Missouri Census Data Center, 4.


9. Missouri Census Data Center, 5.


13. Missouri Census Data Center, 10.

14. Missouri Census Data Center, 14.


17. Missouri Census Data Center, 10.


19. Missouri Census Data Center, 16.


21. Missouri Census Data Center, 7.


27. St. Louis Home Builders Association. Note that the Association reports for all Missouri counties in the MSA, except Washington. Also single family permit information in 2000 and 2001 is not available for Warren County. Totals for 2000-2008 are City of St. Louis (3758 including major rehabilitation projects as well as new dwellings); St. Louis (12,055); St. Charles (28,837); Jefferson (10,949); Franklin (1520); Lincoln (1470); Warren (1970). Most, but not all building permits for a new unit, actually get constructed.

28. Information about foreclosures has been drawn primarily from Mike Duncan (St. Louis County Planning), T.J. Meyers (City of St. Louis Planning and Urban Design Agency), Rob Ryan (Regionwise) and Tim Logan (St. Louis Post Dispatch). Also Reality-Trak.com and Foreclosure.com.


33. Author of *The Rise of the Creative Class*, *Cities and the Creative Class*, and *Who’s Your City*, Richard Florida compares cities in terms of their technology, software workers, arts and culture, “coolness” (nightlife, bars, etc.), gay and lesbian population, etc. His overall message is that human capital (“talent”) is the “driving factor” in regional development, and that openness to diversity is critical to attracting talent and generating technology intensive industry.


36. Darst, 34.

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<td>61.55%</td>
<td>561.4</td>
<td>612.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
<td>993,529</td>
<td>1,016,315</td>
<td>995,118</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td>507.8</td>
<td>1959.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Louis City, MO</td>
<td>396,685</td>
<td>348,189</td>
<td>350,759</td>
<td>-11.58%</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>5298.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison, IL</td>
<td>249,238</td>
<td>258,941</td>
<td>267,347</td>
<td>7.27%</td>
<td>725.1</td>
<td>368.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe, IL</td>
<td>22,422</td>
<td>27,619</td>
<td>32,372</td>
<td>44.38%</td>
<td>388.3</td>
<td>83.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Clair, IL</td>
<td>262,852</td>
<td>256,082</td>
<td>261,316</td>
<td>-0.58%</td>
<td>663.9</td>
<td>393.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-Total</td>
<td>2,389,616</td>
<td>2,482,935</td>
<td>2,566,985</td>
<td>7.42%</td>
<td>4,492</td>
<td>571.51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non MPO Counties pre 2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton, IL</td>
<td>33,944</td>
<td>35,535</td>
<td>36,450</td>
<td>7.38%</td>
<td>474.3</td>
<td>76.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersey, IL</td>
<td>20,539</td>
<td>21,668</td>
<td>22,455</td>
<td>9.33%</td>
<td>369.2</td>
<td>60.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln, MO</td>
<td>28,892</td>
<td>38,944</td>
<td>51,528</td>
<td>78.35%</td>
<td>630.5</td>
<td>81.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren, MO</td>
<td>19,534</td>
<td>24,525</td>
<td>30,467</td>
<td>55.97%</td>
<td>431.7</td>
<td>70.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Total</td>
<td>102,909</td>
<td>120,672</td>
<td>140,900</td>
<td>36.92%</td>
<td>1,906</td>
<td>73.94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Non MPO counties added post 2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond, IL</td>
<td>14,991</td>
<td>17,633</td>
<td>18,103</td>
<td>20.76%</td>
<td>380.2</td>
<td>47.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calhoun, IL</td>
<td>5,322</td>
<td>5,084</td>
<td>5,167</td>
<td>-2.91%</td>
<td>253.8</td>
<td>20.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macoupin, IL</td>
<td>47,679</td>
<td>49,019</td>
<td>48,235</td>
<td>1.17%</td>
<td>863.7</td>
<td>55.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, MO</td>
<td>20,380</td>
<td>23,344</td>
<td>24,317</td>
<td>19.32%</td>
<td>759.8</td>
<td>32.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Total</td>
<td>88,372</td>
<td>95,080</td>
<td>95,822</td>
<td>8.43%</td>
<td>2,258</td>
<td>42.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>2,580,897</td>
<td>2,698,687</td>
<td>2,803,707</td>
<td>8.63%</td>
<td>8,655</td>
<td>323.95</td>
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</table>

Table 2 – Selected Income and Housing Characteristics per County (2005-2007 est.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPO Counties</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>% Families in Poverty</th>
<th>% Owner Occ. Homes</th>
<th>% Percent Vacant Housing Units</th>
<th>Median Value Owner Occ. Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franklin, MO</td>
<td>48,567</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>138,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson, MO</td>
<td>55,295</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>147,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles, MO</td>
<td>66,370</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>186,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
<td>56,280</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>172,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis City, MO</td>
<td>33,221</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>115,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison, IL</td>
<td>50,356</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>115,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe, IL</td>
<td>62,627</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>179,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Clair, IL</td>
<td>46,462</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>109,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non MPO Counties pre 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPO Counties</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>% Families in Poverty</th>
<th>% Owner Occ. Homes</th>
<th>% Percent Vacant Housing Units</th>
<th>Median Value Owner Occ. Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinton IL</td>
<td>52,104</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>113,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersey, IL</td>
<td>52,029</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>81.9</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>105,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln, MO</td>
<td>52,945</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>150,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren, MO</td>
<td>49,510</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>156,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional Non MPO counties added post 2000 (2000 figures)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPO Counties</th>
<th>Median Household Income</th>
<th>% Families in Poverty</th>
<th>% Owner Occ. Homes</th>
<th>% Percent Vacant Housing Units</th>
<th>Median Value Owner Occ. Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bond, IL</td>
<td>37,680</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>68,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calhoun, IL</td>
<td>34,375</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>61,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macoupin, IL</td>
<td>44,791</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>88,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, MO</td>
<td>35,661</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>90,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPO Counties</th>
<th>% Under 18</th>
<th>% Over Age 65</th>
<th>% White Pop.</th>
<th>% Black Pop.</th>
<th>% Native American</th>
<th>% Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franklin, MO</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson, MO</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>96.7%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles, MO</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis City, MO</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td>49.2%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison, IL</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe, IL</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Clair, IL</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>67.3%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non MPO Counties pre 2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton IL</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>94.2%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersey, IL</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln, MO</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>95.6%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren, MO</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Non MPO counties added post 2000 (2000 figures)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond, IL</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calhoun, IL</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>98.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macoupin, IL</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, MO</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franklin, MO</td>
<td>42,340</td>
<td>31,348</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>1,437</td>
<td>5,094</td>
<td>4,240</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>5,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson, MO</td>
<td>84,919</td>
<td>64,206</td>
<td>1,292</td>
<td>1,116</td>
<td>12,115</td>
<td>10,012</td>
<td>2,012</td>
<td>12,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles, MO</td>
<td>130,963</td>
<td>97,688</td>
<td>8,313</td>
<td>1,781</td>
<td>5,198</td>
<td>22,395</td>
<td>4,901</td>
<td>27,296</td>
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<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
<td>433,965</td>
<td>315,125</td>
<td>19,159</td>
<td>7,198</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>15,483</td>
<td>3,970</td>
<td>19,453</td>
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<td>St. Louis City, MO</td>
<td>179,443</td>
<td>78,912</td>
<td>6,833</td>
<td>30,110</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>3,325</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>4,308</td>
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<td>Madison, IL</td>
<td>116,269</td>
<td>89,794</td>
<td>2,202</td>
<td>4,602</td>
<td>4,157</td>
<td>8,220</td>
<td>1,768</td>
<td>9,988</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12,534</td>
<td>10,204</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>2,023</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>2,481</td>
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<tr>
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<td>79,249</td>
<td>3,692</td>
<td>5,298</td>
<td>7,535</td>
<td>9,513</td>
<td>2,017</td>
<td>11,530</td>
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<td>766,526</td>
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<td>52,048</td>
<td>35,713</td>
<td>75,211</td>
<td>17,066</td>
<td>92,277</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non MPO Counties pre 2000</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton, IL</td>
<td>14,847</td>
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<td>345</td>
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<td>1,391</td>
<td>1,047</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>1,241</td>
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<td>Jersey, IL</td>
<td>9,658</td>
<td>7,853</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>886</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln, MO</td>
<td>17,219</td>
<td>12,443</td>
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<td>215</td>
<td>3,665</td>
<td>3,658</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>4,519</td>
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<td>Warren, MO</td>
<td>13,493</td>
<td>9,723</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>2,185</td>
<td>2,333</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Total</td>
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<td>41,791</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>8,127</td>
<td>7,496</td>
<td>1,674</td>
<td>9,170</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Non MPO counties added post 2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond, IL (2000)</td>
<td>6,690</td>
<td>4,956</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>1,217</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calhoun, IL (2000)</td>
<td>2,681</td>
<td>2,148</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macoupin, IL</td>
<td>22,041</td>
<td>17,661</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>2,317</td>
<td>1,608</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>1,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, MO</td>
<td>10,281</td>
<td>6,208</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>3,508</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Total</td>
<td>41,693</td>
<td>30,973</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>7,450</td>
<td>2,162</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>2,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>1,210,427</td>
<td>839,290</td>
<td>44,080</td>
<td>53,870</td>
<td>51,290</td>
<td>84,869</td>
<td>19,238</td>
<td>104,107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Facts and Figures

Fortune 500 companies in St. Louis
Emerson Express - $22,572,000,000 – Electronic Components
Express Scripts - $18,377,000,000 – Pharmacy Benefits Management
Anheuser-Bush - $16,687,000,000 – Malt Beverages, Amusement Parks
Monsanto - $8,607,000,000 – Agriculture and Biotechnology
Ameren - $7,548,000,000 – Utilities
Charter Communications - $6,002,000,000 – Cable Television
Peabody Energy - $5,999,000,000 – Coal Mining and Processing
Graybar Electric - $5,258,000,000 – Electronic Parts and Equipment

What constitutes the St. Louis Area?
It all depends. The East West Gateway Coordinating Council (the regional planning agency) serves 8 counties, 5 in Missouri and 3 in Illinois. The United Way of Greater St. Louis focuses its assistance on people in 14 counties. And so on.
The official definitions of Metropolitan Statistical Areas are made by the United States Office of Management and Budget in cooperation with the Census Bureau. An MSA must have a “core” city of 50,000 or more, and have surrounding counties that are “socially and economically” integrated with the central area, as determined by commuting patterns.
Prior to 2000, the MSA consisted of 12 counties, the 8 that make up the EWGCC constituents, and 4 “collar” counties. After the 2000 decennial census, four additional were added in recognition of the fact that 25 percent or more of their residents commuted to counties that were then in the MSA.

Challenges for St. Louis in the years ahead
- Transforming our economy to a post industrial, knowledge-based economy, emphasizing biotechnology, information technology and advanced manufacturing
- Improving the quality and effectiveness of education at all levels
- Prioritizing assistance for youth, especially those at risk – additional mentoring, after school, employment and internship opportunities, and more.
- Stabilizing and expanding Metro and other public transit systems
- Reinvigorating Downtown St. Louis with new Class A office space, more retail and tourist attractions, continued housing and aesthetic improvements.
- Pushing for Ball Park Village, Kiel Opera House, a livelier river front, a new museum at the edge of the Arch grounds, the Chotseau Lake project, and other attractions.
- Encouraging the redevelopment of distressed neighborhoods throughout the region.
- Increasing our ability to deal with inevitable future disasters, both natural and man made.

Recent St. Louis Claims to Fame*
“Most Affordable Place to Live Well” No. 4, Forbes Magazine, November 2007
“18th Smartest Place to Live” Kiplinger Personal Finance, 2006
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W(H)ITHER ST. LOUIS?
Mark Tranel

He is bold who ventures to suggest the character and the quality of the city of the future. It is possible to predict some of the physical trends and perhaps the industrial. But what the human city will be will depend in the last analysis upon the changes which will come in our thinking. For, as a city thinks, so it will be in spite of physical and industrial forces or perhaps better, because of its control of such forces. And this is why planning and thinking about planning is important.¹

How then to think about the future of metropolitan St. Louis? For the past 50 years there has been an outsized set of both absolute and comparative indicators generally showing a withering trend. Over the period 1950 – 2000, metropolitan St. Louis slipped from the 10th to the 18th largest U.S. metropolitan area by population size, from 11th to 20th in total personal income and recently was ranked 160th in job growth, just to list a few of the indicators. As will be detailed in this chapter, however, there are a number of demographic, economic, and social indicators that in the early years of the 21st Century have shown improvement in the character and quality of the St. Louis region, none of them dramatic, but significant enough to reinforce civic administrator Clarence Dykstra’s call for controlling these changes by deliberative planning. The region cannot plan its way back to its 19th Century status as one of the top five urban centers in the United States. But it can influence its destiny. In The Possible City, Nathaniel Popkin distinguishes between an urban area that functions and one that performs, the difference between resisting paralysis and making one feel great.² In the last half of the 20th Century, the St. Louis region functioned. In the 21st Century metropolitan St. Louis needs to think of itself as a performer, to feel great about itself.

CHARACTER...OF THE PLACE

When St. Louis urban planner Harland Bartholomew spoke in 1934 to the National Conference on City Planning, he thought of metropolitan St. Louis in terms of population growth. He reported on a six-month planning study completed by the St. Louis Regional Planning Federation in June 1934 that projected the St. Louis region would grow by an average 14.5 percent over the next few decades. The report’s estimated 1960 population of 2 million, it turns out, was quite accurate.³ In the
decades after 1960, however, the St. Louis region grew at less than five percent per decade. There even was a net loss of regional population in the 1970s. The centerpiece of this stagnation was the precipitous decline in the population of the City of St. Louis. The thinking about St. Louis was succinctly stated by Forbes Magazine, “St. Louis likes to call itself the gateway to the West. Alas, the gate opens out.” That trend is changing. Not a return to the robust growth that realized the Planning Federation’s prediction, but the Census Bureau’s 2007 estimated population for the City of St. Louis shows an increase. While 4,200 people is not a dramatic increase, after decades as the poster child for enormous and relentless urban decline, it may be time to think about the City of St. Louis in different terms. And the trend is changing for the region as a whole. The projected population for the metropolitan area over the first two decades of the 21st Century shows a healthier nine percent increase, almost double the rate of the last several decades.

Expansion of the Place

Over the last half of the 20th Century physical growth was the most notable growth characteristic metropolitan St. Louis experienced. The region expanded from just less than 2,600 square miles to just over 8,600, what economist Basil Zimmer called ‘urban centrifugal drift.’ In 1950 the Census Bureau defined metropolitan St. Louis as the City of St. Louis and two Illinois and two Missouri counties. After the 2000 Census metropolitan St. Louis included the City and 15 counties spread across the two states. From the day Pierre Laclede Liguest set foot on the western bank of the Mississippi 245 years ago, development has radiated from that site like waves from a stone thrown into a pond, perhaps not as evenly, but as ever outward. That trend is changing. The 2010 Census will record that for the first time in six decades, there will be no counties added to the St. Louis MSA. While there will be continued pressure for outward expansion, there will be cross currents of redevelopment in the central city and inner suburbs. Changing lifestyle choices, lack of funds for expensive infrastructure for the marginal few, and a growing awareness by the development community of the opportunities for profitability with infill projects will abate St. Louis’s former rapacious appetite for land consumption.

Economy of the Place

The metropolitan St. Louis economy experienced significant transformation over the last-half century. St. Louis is what economist Charles Leven calls a ‘mature metropolis.’ In a mature metropolis growth no longer is induced by expansion of the manufacturing sector. The increasing importance of an array of service industries requires a more interactive relationship between the public and the private sectors. While economic development professionals have pursued various strategies to build upon St. Louis’s mature economic strengths, general thinking and planning have not embraced St. Louis’s place in the global economy. The economy of metropolitan St. Louis is the 66th largest economy in the world. It requires expansive thinking to grasp St. Louis’s role in the global economic structure, akin to the kind of thinking St. Louis strove for in its mercantile and industrial era, according to historian Eric Sandweiss. Sandweiss documented the tension between local and regional interests and how that structured the landscape as St. Louis consumed land. In Sandweiss’ lexicon a “wider setting” is the hoped for regional interest and “fenced-off corners” are the parochial local interests which actually dominate the landscape.
Governance of the Place

A mature metropolis may require a purposeful role for the public sector, but lack of a common vision in that sector is a significant challenge. Fenced-off corners were not only visible in the environment, but also on the political map as planning and thinking ossified into a highly fragmented structure of municipalities and special districts, such as fire or school districts. But that trend has begun to change. Jones and Phares trace how, with little fanfare, St. Louis has been reorienting toward wider setting thinking. They acknowledge the various failures at establishing a comprehensive regional government structure, but then inventory all the multijurisdictional initiatives that have developed through what they term incremental regionalism.10

Regional cooperation has been implemented in a number of service areas and through a number of structural forms. While this trend has not eliminated any of the historical fenced off corners, it is creating a regional perspective on taking action to deliver public goods.

Preoccupation with the many local governments in the region has distracted attention from three larger developments that are relevant to St. Louis’s ability to think of itself as a globally competitive region. First of all, the region has developed a greater degree of multiplicity in nonprofit organizations than in local governments. There are over 15,000 nonprofit organizations competing for resources, often duplicating services in highly specialized niche services. While there have been many assessments of the impact of the fragmented public sector in metropolitan St. Louis, there is too little attention given to the role and impact of nongovernmental organizations.

Secondly, the metropolitan area is not under the jurisdiction of a single planning authority. East-West Gateway Council of Governments, the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the region, does not serve the Census-defined St. Louis region. The seven Missouri counties and City of St. Louis are divided among three regional planning authorities.11 There is one regional planning authority that serves some of the eight Illinois counties and some are under no regional planning jurisdiction. When thinking about planning for the region St. Louis does not have a common table at the county level for every one to sit around.

And the third development literally requires “big picture” thinking. Planners Armando Carbonell and Robert Yaro foresee a competitive disadvantage for the United States as the European Union develops regional planning at a continental scale. As is the case in Europe, there are American metropolitan regions growing
together in large-scale areas of dense urban development that geographer Jean Gottman termed megalopolitan areas. Carbonell and Yaro identify eight such areas in the United States. Projections are that in the coming years approximately 70 percent of population growth in the United States will occur within these areas, as well as about 80 percent of the growth in personal wealth. While St. Louis is included in the larger Midwest urban region (the shaded shapes surrounding the megalopolitan areas), it is not in the Midwest megalopolitan area. St. Louis needs to think of itself as eligible for megalopolitan status and engage in the infrastructure and other planning that can keep American megalopoli competitive with similar urban development patterns in Europe and around the world.

Population patterns, abatement of geographic expansion, global economic competitiveness, and potential for greater regional governance are a few indicators of the changing external and internal characteristics of Metropolitan St. Louis. These indicators document the need to think about, and plan for, St. Louis in a national and international context.

CHARACTER...OF THE PEOPLE

There are several changes occurring in the composition of the population of metropolitan St. Louis that will require thinking differently and planning for the provision of both private goods and public services. The most significant change, shown in Figure 1, is the absolute number and the percentage of the population in metropolitan St. Louis that will be senior citizens. In 1990 the largest age group in the population was 25 to 34 year-olds—the group most active in moving into the housing market. From that peak it was a rather gradual tapering off of age groups to the first senior citizen cohort, those 65 to 74. By 2007 the peak shifted to the 45 to 54 year old category with a precipitous drop off to the first senior cohort.

The first wave of the baby boomers to retire, those 55 to 64 in Figure 1, is 12 percent larger than that age cohort was in 1990. The 45 to 54 year-old group is 17 percent larger than the same age group in 1990. Thus, between approximately 2010 and 2030 over 750,000 baby boomers will be leaving the job market and making alternative housing and/or relocation decisions. This demographic tsunami will require thinking and planning in workforce development, transportation, health care and housing. Demographer William Frey describes how seniors should no longer be thought of as a single group. The needs of preseniors (55-64), young seniors (65-74), and mature seniors (75-84+) have very different impacts on communities.

There is another population group that may be the most influenced by thinking and planning of all the elements discussed in this chapter. In all large cities in the United States where the population is increasing, immigration is fueling the increase. Traditionally immigrants and refugees would cluster in locations where others of the same ethnicity or nationality had already settled. While the metropolitan areas of five states (California, New York, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey) continue to dominate as the place of residence for the foreign-born population in the United States, particularly since 2000 there has been a decided increase in the size of the immigrant population in states including Missouri, Nebraska, and North Carolina. While immigration has not been a contributor of consequence to population growth in metropolitan St. Louis, the trend has been toward an increasing number of foreign-born residents. In 1990 there were 48,678 foreign-born residents in the region. During the decade of the 1990s there were an additional 32,267 foreign-born residents added to the population. The Census estimate for 2007 reports 112,233 foreign-born residents, almost equaling the growth in the previous decade.
While the number of immigrants and refugees moving to St. Louis in the later portion of the 20th Century has been small, there is a persistent pattern of extreme diversity. Figure 2 shows data for 2007 for persons obtaining legal permanent resident status in the St. Louis metropolitan area. While about one quarter (24 percent) of these new residents come from the three countries of India, China, and Vietnam, more than half (53 percent) are groups of less than 85 persons coming from 100 different countries. This pattern is in marked contrast to the large immigrant enclaves in the metropolitan areas that are attracting large numbers of immigrants. St. Louis needs to understand the dynamics of its expanding immigrant population.

Sources: US Census: 2000 Census and 2007 American Community Survey
There are other characteristics of the people of metropolitan St. Louis that follow national patterns that had been changing since the 1960s. The social transformation that occurred between 1960 and 1990 has now somewhat stabilized. The increased participation of women in the workforce, the decline of married couple households, and the increase in the number of one-person households are all population dynamics that underwent considerable evolution in the past half-century. For example, as shown in Table 1, household composition in the 21st Century is very different from mid-20th Century. The majority of households (approximately 70 percent) do not have children under age 18. Of households with children, approximately one-third are single parent households. And there are nearly as many households in the St. Louis area with a person living alone as there are households with children. These evolving characteristics of the population of the St. Louis area influenced housing, transportation, education and other areas over the last few decades. There will not be the same types of social change over the next several decades as was experienced in the past several decades. Planners, therefore, should be able to make relatively accurate projections regarding the composition of the population since it should be a constant variable.
Table 1. Composition of Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSEHOLD TYPE</th>
<th>NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS</th>
<th>PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married couple with children</td>
<td>226,754</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single parent with children</td>
<td>110,709</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Householder living alone</td>
<td>308,449</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census: 2007 American Community Survey

The pending rapid expansion in the senior population, the slow but steady growth of the immigrant population and the mature stage of social evolution indicate Metropolitan St. Louis needs to think of, and plan for, itself as a different group of people than the population we may typically picture.

THINKING…ABOUT PLANNING

_The best way to predict the future is to invent it_, Alan Kay

How then to respond to Dykstra’s admonition to plan and to think about planning? Three questions are important to framing a response:

1. Planning for whom?
2. Planning for what purpose?
3. Planning by what means?

For Whom?

Planning should be comprehensive, addressing the entire community, but as can be seen from the indicators discussed above there are targeted populations that will be of particular importance in the next couple of decades. The full impact of the aging of the baby boom generation, or senior boomers, on metropolitan St. Louis will depend on the countervailing demographic processes of aging in place and retirement migration. Demographer Mark Mather reported on the trend since 2000 of the earliest of the senior boomers (those born in 1946) moving to not only Sunbelt states but also mid-Atlantic and northwest states. Wilmoth and Longino report, however, that only four to five percent of persons over 60 make an interstate move in any five-year period. Adapting the St. Louis area to an aging in place population will require thought and planning. The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and Partners for Livable Communities have outlined the dynamics that will determine the impact of senior boomers retirement on metropolitan areas such as St. Louis over the next twenty to thirty years:

- The number of retirees that choose to remain in the region.
- The life style choices of the senior boomers who do choose to age in place. The low density, large unit residential development of the past 30 years was primarily designed to meet the needs of parent-child families. It is argued that higher density development provides greater access and choices for a healthier, higher quality of life for seniors. Whether retiring baby boomers define place as the housing unit one lives in at time of retirement or as the community or metropolitan area will influence demand for housing, health care,
transportation and many other metropolitan characteristics.

- The degree to which the baby boomer generation segments into Frey’s three groups—especially the young seniors the mature seniors. In past decades the trend toward longer life spans has not been significant enough to have a community-level impact. A large population of 80+-year-old residents in the St. Louis area would create demand for new housing, health care, and transportation resources.

There are many challenges and opportunities that this demographic shift will present in the coming years.

The other population group for whom planning presents new opportunities is the immigrant population. Growth in the regional economy will depend to a large degree on the significant need for attracting a workforce to fill the gap created by the retiring baby boomers. There will continue to be immigrant population growth occurring in the United States over the time this gap is created. Whether thinking and planning in St. Louis changes to attract a higher percentage of immigrants will influence many other indicators of regional growth or decline.

For What Purpose?

Can St. Louis climb back up the national rankings? Should that indeed even be a goal? Is it the numbers or the quality? Architect/planner Douglas Kelbaugh provides a familiar litany of public policy solutions for regional progress: get development priorities right (redevelopment over new development); get automobiles under control (eliminate subsidies); get transit on track (increase subsidies); get planning (regional planning authority); get granny flats and live-work units (mixed use zoning); get funding and taxing right (to fund redevelopment, transit, etc); and, get governance right (regional and neighborhood authority). There is progress in the St. Louis area on some of these solutions, some have been rejected, and some have not been considered.

The St. Louis region should have a heritage strategy and a development strategy. There are many heritage elements of the built environment produced through the process Sandweiss details. But adapting the St. Louis area to the realities of the 21st Century will require reimagining the use of this space to develop the cultural, economic, and social opportunities for the changing regional population. With over 8,600 square miles to work with, there is plenty of room for imagination.

By What Means?

There is a pronounced trend in the first decade of the 21st Century among metropolitan areas to develop a regional strategic plan. Boston, Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Portland and New York, among others, have developed such plans. While they are each unique, there are a number of common characteristics:

- The 2030 time horizon – many of the plans use the year 2030 as a planning target. While the specific year is somewhat arbitrary, the general principle is to think long term.

- Comprehensive goals and objectives – single-solution approaches are ineffective. The recent upsurge of regional strategic plans is not focused on one regional component such as transportation, housing, or workforce development. They are comprehensive, integrating needs and resources to form seamless systems.
Participation – all of the planning processes involved community input as an essential component. The plans are not based on an academic’s or reformer’s opinion of what metropolitan areas should do. As historian Roy Lubove emphasized, “If we aspire to temper the purely market and ecological processes which organize the urban community with calculated intervention and direction, we need some consensus about what we want to achieve.”

Measuring progress – each of these plans includes a strategy for implementation that identifies responsible parties and creates measures for determining whether and how effectively the plans are being carried out.

These examples can only provide guidance in terms of process. Plans can be comprehensive and regional without ignoring the multiple local governments within the metropolitan area. The 2030 Regional Development Framework prepared by the Metropolitan Council of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area “…recognizes that “one size does not fit all” – that different communities have different opportunities, needs and aspirations.” There are multiple examples from which St. Louis can learn how other metropolitan areas have incorporated the perspectives of both fenced-off corners and wider settings. The St. Louis area is not unique in its problems but it is a slowcoach in its approach to solutions.

In addition to broad regional strategic plans, there are very specific approaches. The Brookings Institution recommends a goal of attracting two percent of a metropolitan area’s population to live downtown. Based on the 2000 Census for metropolitan St. Louis, that would be approximately 54,000 residents in downtown St. Louis, an aggressive increase over the approximately 11,000 residents in 2008. Suggested strategies for achieving such a goal include targeted fiscal incentives to attract homebuyers and employers, locating new college and university campuses downtown, and “transformative” investments in infrastructure.

Another specific approach that can be sensitive to local authority is zoning reform. The St. Louis area needs comprehensive zoning reform. Local governments with zoning authority in metropolitan St. Louis cannot be compelled to adopt changes in their codes, but they can be educated about the changing needs of the region and the connection between zoning and growth opportunities. Zoning changes will be needed, for example, to provide the housing options and structure of services for the senior population boom, what Gerald Hodge calls “the geography of later life.”

There are abundant examples of metropolitan areas thinking and planning for who and what they will be in the future. If the St. Louis area is to perform in the 21st Century, and not just function, there is much to learn, and act on.

WHITHER METROPOLITAN ST. LOUIS?

Two forces will have significant influence over the fate of metropolitan St. Louis in the next thirty years. The first is the ever-changing internal and external environment affecting St. Louis. An aging population and a global economy are but two examples. Many of these effects are identifiable and quantifiable, providing the means to shape a future. The second is whether metropolitan St. Louis acts on Dykstra’s admonition to control its fate by how it thinks. If St. Louis thinks of itself in terms of its limitations, it may see more withering indicators in the 21st Century. As self-help writer Anthony Robbins has opined, “If you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve
always got.” If, however, St. Louis changes its thinking and plans for a future that successfully attracts a growing population of immigrants, that acknowledges the diversity of its population, and that joins the metropolitan areas preparing strategic plans, the indicators of the next thirty years can have a very different history than the indicators of the last thirty years.
Endnotes

6. In 1950 the U.S. Census defined the St. Louis Standard Metropolitan Area as the City of St. Louis, St. Charles and St. Louis Counties in Missouri, Madison and St. Clair Counties in Illinois. In 2003 the U.S. Census redefinition included the City of St. Louis, 8 Illinois and 7 Missouri counties.
11. East-West Gateway’s Missouri service area includes the City of St. Louis and the counties of Franklin, Jefferson, St. Charles and St. Louis. The Boonslick Regional Planning Commission serves 3 counties including the St. Louis MSA counties of Lincoln and Warren. The Meramec Regional Planning Commission serves 8 counties, including the St. Louis MSA county of Washington. East-West Gateway’s Illinois service area includes Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair Counties. The Illinois counties of Bond, Calhoun, Clinton, Jersey, and Macoupin are not in the service area of a regional planning authority.


Popkin, Nathaniel. The Possible City: Exercises in Dreaming Philadelphia. Philadelphia: Camino Books,
2008.


Copies of regional strategic plans:
About the Author

Mark Tranel is the Director of the University of Missouri-St. Louis Public Policy Research Center and Research Associate Professor of Public Policy Administration. Dr. Tranel served as principal investigator on over 60 applied research projects since joining the University in 1990. He is the editor of *St. Louis Plans*, the third volume in the St. Louis Metromorphosis series. His work has been published in the *Journal of Urban Affairs* and *National Civic Review*. His doctorate in public policy analysis and administration is from St. Louis University.
OVERVIEW

The essay’s proposition is that effective solutions to many of the problems facing the St. Louis Metro-East Region can be achieved only through effective collaboration and cooperation between communities and various groups on a regional level rather than through the more common unilateral approach communities often use to address problems.

The essay will first provide an overview of the importance of regional planning and cooperation in a democratic society, with a focus on the Metro-East. Next, it will explore a conceptual framework to help us understand how effective regional decision-making and collaboration can be achieved, using the Denver Regional Council of Governments and the Denver area Mayor’s Caucus as examples. Lastly, the essay concludes with a case study involving Scott Air Force Base and Mid America Airport, outlining how regional planning and cooperation is effectively addressing the challenges and opportunities around the joint airfield complex. In particular, it will explore the 2008 Scott Air Force Base/Mid America Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) and how that effort can be used as a model for future regional decision-making.

THE CASE FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION

Regional Challenges and Opportunities for Cooperation in the Metro-East

The Metro-East area of the St. Louis metropolitan region has undergone significant changes during the last thirty years. As land development and population growth (or more accurately “shifts”) within in the region have accelerated over this period, many communities have wrestled with how to adequately address the consequences of those well documented changes. As can be seen in the demographic trends in St. Clair and Madison Counties, some cities, such as East St. Louis, have experienced pervasive, continuous decline in their industrial, commercial, and residential sectors. On the other hand, cities like Edwardsville and O’Fallon have seen unprecedented residential and commercial growth during this period, bringing with it a different but equally challenging set of problems.
As a result of the broad impacts of these regional economic and population shifts, a whole host of challenges face the Metro-East, many requiring significant levels of planning and cooperation between government, private industry, and education. These include addressing problems related to transportation, environmental quality, redevelopment, management of growth pressures on cities, school overcrowding/decline, flooding and levees, Scott Air Force Base retention and expansion, revenue disparities/tax burdens, infrastructure strains resulting from both growth and decline, and social disparities and race relations.

When looking at these issues, it becomes readily apparent that most, if not all of them, have implications that cut across multiple political jurisdictions. Since in Illinois no regional authority exists that is vested with decision-making authority or the police power to enforce it, issues of regional importance are often either simply not addressed or are left up to local governments, regional planning organizations, civic groups, non-profits or non-governmental organizations, or loosely organized special interest or single-interest groups-- most of which have no authority, interest, or experience in tackling regional problems.

Although no individual group or regional body has clear, direct authority over land use and development decision-making in the Metro-East, regional cooperation and collaboration can help fill this void and provide real solutions to the pressing problems of the region. I would argue that the relationships born out of genuine efforts to cooperate and collaborate between communities, even in light of the natural competitive forces that may exist, can establish a solid foundation for achieving sustainable communities without engendering the negative effects often created by unrestrained competition between neighbors. Those communities that realize their self-interests are protected, rather than diminished, through reaching supportive working relationships with their neighbors are those communities, and by extension, those regions, that will ultimately be most sustainable over the long term.

In discussions about city and regional growth, a very real tension exists between those who believe that collaboration and cooperation can lead to successful regional solutions and those who argue that competitive forces between communities leads to a freedom of choice for those who choose to vote with their feet, with community viability playing out in the “free marketplace” as some sort of Darwinian natural selection, or as coined by British Economist Herbert Spencer, “survival of the fittest”.

While a degree of competition between communities is natural and to varying degrees inevitable, the destructive side of this competition must be mitigated if we are to ever realize effective regional cooperation. The concept of winners and losers in the public arena is one that ultimately leads to a zero-sum game where the larger region neither wins nor loses. Destructive competition promotes a “winner takes all” approach to community growth, with “success” being somehow equated with “winning.” In a larger sense, destructive competition between communities can also be a wasteful, energy expending exercise. Alfie Kohn in his book *No Contest: The Case Against Competition*, states that “Non-cooperative approaches…almost always involve duplication of
effort, since someone working independently must spend time and skills on problems that already
have been encountered and overcome by someone else.”

This is contrasted with cooperative competition, which encourages mutual survival in a
competitive environment and where excellence is striven for yet which does not seek to harm
or diminish others. This approach requires communities to work together in more cooperative,
supportive relationships. In an increasingly complex and diverse environment, one key toward
achieving sustainable regional development is to encourage non-zero sum advancement in the health
and well-being of every community, with the stronger ones realizing their continued “success”
depends in great measure on the health of their neighbors.

Addressing Problems from a Regional Perspective

How do we get there? Can cooperation between communities be achieved in effective,
sustainable ways, and can it really help solve problems of regional importance? Part of the challenge
in getting communities and various groups to participate in regional problem solving is first realizing
that a problem exists, and then that the problem has a direct bearing on a community’s self-interests.
Bruce Katz quotes urban scholar Ethan Seltzer as saying “In general, coalition building is critical to
regionalism because of the nature of a region. In most cases, the region is nobody’s community.
This means that getting any action at the regional scale requires creating new collaborative
alignments among interests who previously either didn’t believe that they shared issues in common,
or who knew it but felt no compelling reason to act on it. In the end, the story of the effective
metropolitan regionalism is always going to be the search for cross-cutting issues, a never-ending
saga that is the meat and potatoes of those efforts.”

Unfortunately, it often takes a precipitating crisis to “wake up” the political and civic
leadership of a region to the need for cooperation. There is, in the aftermath of such a precipitating
event, a realization that the crisis is beyond the solution of any one governmental entity and that
working together is the best way to tackle it. The larger challenge to regional decision-making arises
when there is no perceived crisis, but rather a longer, more protracted “nagging” ailment that lies
beneath the surface. It is precisely that kind of problem that must be dealt with early on before
it becomes larger, more difficult, and often more expensive to resolve. Building coalitions and
cooperative relationships prior to the onset of such an unexpected disruptive event is important in
being prepared for a regional crisis. Julie Parzen, as part of the Metropolitan Initiative sponsored
by the Brookings Institution Center for Urban and Metropolitan Policy, stated that “Collaborations
have a better chance in places where there are already networks of communication that provide ways
to talk across the community.”

For communities to set the stage for effective regional cooperation and problem solving,
four things generally need to be in place:

1. Intersecting interests
2. Expectation of future value from working together
3. Common or similar geography/proximity
4. Institutional memory of previous interactions with that community – history with them. Were
   the experiences good or bad? Is there a level of trust?
A Framework for Successful Regional Cooperation: Denver’s Metro Vision 2020

In looking for models of successful regional planning and cooperation, the experience of the Denver Regional Council of Governments (COG) and its Metro Vision 2020 (now 2035) initiative deserves exploration. In 1990, the Denver COG established a regional planning forum known as Metro Vision 2020 to address the impacts of growth and development on the Denver Metro area. The forum was made up of numerous citizens, interest groups, and elected officials from across the Denver region, and it tackled such difficult issues as revenue sharing and a growing tax burden, traffic congestion, environmental quality, providing adequate infrastructure, open space, and growth management.

Metro Vision 2020 apparently started like many “typical” regional planning efforts do, with an emphasis on staff control and technical planning analysis and included several public input sessions. However, it became clear that making the process, and consequently the outcomes, more effective and locally accountable was needed in order to have a plan with broad support that could effect real change in the region. Over the ensuing eight year time-frame, Metro Vision 2020 evolved into a broadly based initiative, with elected officials playing a greater role in garnering support for the process and in establishing a policy direction that could be supported and signed on to by the local communities.

While the forum’s technical steering committee gathered and analyzed a variety of technical information, the policy committee worked to define principles on how to gain consensus among the region’s communities about where and how the region should grow and how improvements should be financed. Four major principles were established by the policy committee to guide the Metro Vision’s recommendations for the plan. The committee believed that the regional plan, and consequently the recommendations in it, should be: (1) voluntarily approved by each community; (2) flexible enough to allow for variations in the circumstances and politics of each local government; (3) collaborative enough to gain consensus between the local governments around certain key principles, such as adopting the regional plan locally, and making each community’s
comprehensive land use plan consistent with the regional vision; and (4) to have recommendations that would be clear and effective in reaching these agreed upon regional goals.

Another critically important part of the policy-making and consensus-building process was the active backing and support of the plan by the Denver region’s Caucus of Mayors, which gave considerable influence and credibility to the process and to the development of clear policy directions. In this case, the Mayor’s caucus was well equipped to deal with controversial issues such as revenue sharing and the economic inter-relationships of the communities. This was no doubt due, at least in part, to the authority and accountability these chief elected officials already had in tackling thorny issues at the local level. Metro Vision also became an important opportunity for the Mayors to work together on a specific planning project and to continue building those cooperative relationships that would be important during the implementation of the Metro Vision’s recommendations. One of the elected officials who participated in the Metro Vision initiative, Paul Tauer, the Mayor of Aurora, Colorado, stated that one of the greatest benefits of the Mayor’s Caucus was in getting the elected officials to meet together “in face-to-face discussions where they can build relations and establish trust.”

As part of the implementation of the final Metro Vision 2020 Plan (which has subsequently been amended as the 2030 Plan, and later the 2035 Plan), on August 10, 2000, five counties and twenty-five cities signed the Mile High Compact, a voluntary intergovernmental agreement between these units of government that will guide their implementation of the Metro Vision recommendations. As of 2008, a total of thirty-one Mayors had signed the Compact on behalf of their communities. The Compact calls for each community to:

1. Adopt a comprehensive land use plan that includes a common set of elements;
2. Use growth management tools such as zoning regulations, urban growth boundaries, and development codes;
3. Link their comprehensive plans to Metro Vision 2020, which outlines regional growth management; and
4. Work collaboratively to guide growth and ensure planning consistency.

While one of the great strengths of regional organizations such as the Denver COG is to bring a broad array of people together to collaborate and identify solutions to regional problems, such groups may also be limited in their authority to implement tough measures without elected officials agreeing to act collectively through their respective governments. Consequently, commitments from the Mayors to act on the principles adopted in the Metro Vision Plan undoubtedly had a major influence on not only adoption of the Plan but also in making it a document that many of them could collectively adopt and implement as part of their local plans and activities.

Obtaining this degree of regional consensus and cooperation is incredibly difficult, particularly in the absence of any state mandate to do so. By all accounts, the Denver Metro Vision process has been a significant and rare success in the arena of regional planning and intergovernmental cooperation and could serve as a model for other regions facing similar challenges.

Allan Wallis, in describing the Denver Council of Government’s Metro Vision 2020 process, outlined seven elements that were important in facilitating effective regional decision making in the Denver Metro Vision example. The elements he identified are: (a) Multi-sector involvement
is needed; (b) a culture of collaboration should exist; (c) a shared vision of the region should be achieved; (d) committed and networked leadership must champion the effort; (e) the planning process should engage the citizenry; (f) a catalyzing crisis occurs; and (g) a supportive regulatory environment should exist. In addition to these seven principles identified by Wallis, staff from the Denver COG identified seven “Lessons Learned” from the experience, which include:

1. Implementation needs to be voluntary but institutionalized
2. Need to have agreement on a shared vision at a high level
3. The plan needs to be flexible for unique areas and/or circumstances
4. The plan must be taken seriously
5. Communities and organizations need to be willing to change
6. Don’t need to have authority to have influence
7. Need champions for the plan from a variety of communities and sources

In summary, the Denver experience tells us much about what makes for successful regional problem-solving. A region must have a vision and goals worthy of support and then do the difficult work of getting consensus around that vision and its implementation. Ultimately, gaining the voluntary, written commitment of thirty-one communities who agreed to modify their own respective local plans to implement the regional vision forms the backbone of the Denver experience. Replication of this model to other regions, including St. Louis, is certainly possible, but it would be difficult without a level of leadership and commitment similar to that provided by the local elected officials in the Denver region.

THE 2008 JOINT LAND USE STUDY FOR SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE AND MID AMERICA AIRPORT, ILLINOIS: A CASE STUDY IN REGIONAL COOPERATION

Just as the Denver experience is a good case study of effective regional cooperation, the effort to protect Scott Air Force Base in the Metro-East is equally as impressive. While the Denver effort is unique in that it is a broad effort by an entire region to address the complex, multi-faceted issue of growth management, the Scott AFB case is more typical of how regional cooperation is initiated – crisis prevention and management, yet it is less typical because of just how successful these efforts have been.

Following is a case study that provides an overview of the regional efforts to protect Scott Air Force Base and Mid America Joint Use Facility from closure, as well as to strengthen the facility and its long term mission viability. This case study will specifically examine how the 2008 Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) process helped improve intergovernmental cooperation between the communities around Scott AFB, St. Clair County, and the base itself. This study will look at how the principles of regional cooperation and collaboration outlined previously in this essay apply to the JLUS project, how the JLUS has helped improve the working relationship between the communities surrounding the base, and how this regional planning effort can serve as a model for successful regional decision-making in other parts of the St. Louis Metro area.
Regional Cooperation and the Effort to Protect Scott Air Force Base

Imagine waking up in St. Louis one morning to the news that 15,000 jobs were being lost in the region as one of its major employer closed its doors. What would the region do? How would it respond? What impact would that closure have on the economic stability of the St. Louis region and in particular, the Metro-East? While this is an imagined scenario, in 1995 it was not far from becoming reality. Scott Air Force Base, currently the region’s third largest employer with 14,000 jobs, and another 1,000 on the way, was on the cusp of closure during the 1995 Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) round. As a matter of fact, according to the U.S News and World Report, “Scott received the lowest rating of any major Air Force base” during that round of military base closures.

During the past 20 years, a number of efforts have been initiated by several local, state, and federal officials, as well as private sector organizations from across the Metro East region, to do two things: support and strengthen the viability of Scott AFB as a military installation, and limit encroachment of private development against the base. One of the base’s biggest champions has been Congressman Jerry Costello, representing the 12th Congressional District where Scott is located. He has been heavily involved with supporting the mission of Scott AFB since he first started serving in Congress in 1988, working closely with the military and Department of Defense to identify new missions for Scott, with an emphasis on growing it as a headquarters installation. In addition to Congressman Costello, several other groups and local officials have been instrumental in working collectively to provide community and political support for Scott, particularly the Southwestern Illinois leadership Council, the Regional Commerce and Growth Association, St. Clair County, and the Scott-MidAmerica Leadership Council. These regional organizations have been important in not only gaining the political support needed for the base, but also in developing the community support structures needed to advocate for sustaining and growing Scott into the foreseeable future.

Overview of Scott Air Force Base and Mid America Airport

Scott Air Force Base and MidAmerica St. Louis Airport is a joint use airfield complex located in north central St. Clair County, Illinois, nineteen miles east of St. Louis, Missouri. This military and civilian joint use complex serves not only a vital role
in the national defense, but it has a major impact on the employment and economic vitality of the Metro-East region, and indeed the entire St. Louis metro area. Scott AFB, which was established as a military base in 1917, covers over 3,600 acres and employs roughly 14,000 people. It is the third largest employer in the St. Louis region behind BJC Health Care Systems and Boeing and has an estimated two billion dollar annual economic impact on the St. Louis region. In addition to active military personnel and civilian workers, the installation supports approximately 17,000 retirees and over 40,000 military and civilian personnel and their families, both on and off-base. Presently, Scott AFB supports several Air Force command units, including the U.S. Transportation Command, Air Mobility Command, Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, Air Force Communications Agency, Defense Systems Information Agency CONUS, Eighteenth Air Force, 618th Tanker Airlift Control Center, 375th Airlift Wing, 635th Supply Chain Management Wing, 126th Air Refueling Wing (ANG), 932nd Airlift Wing (AFRC), Air Force Contracting Office, and more than 50 other affiliate organizations.

An integral part of the airfield complex is Mid America St. Louis Airport (Airport), which is co-located with Scott AFB. It is owned and operated by St. Clair County and shares certain airfield facilities and operations with Scott AFB through a joint-use agreement. Planning for Mid America began in the 1980’s, with a joint use operations plan for the Scott AFB/Mid America airfield complex being issued in 1991. Construction of the airport began in 1994, and it officially opened to the public in 1998. Since inauguration of the Airport both commercial and passenger service have developed slowly, and currently, the most frequent user of the Mid America’s runway and facilities is the U.S. Air Force.

**Overview of Affected Communities**

Several communities are located around the airfield complex, including the City of O’Fallon, City of Lebanon, City of Mascoutah, and the Village of Shiloh, as well as a large area of unincorporated St. Clair County. In addition, Scott AFB and Mid America are surrounded by several thousand acres of rural, unincorporated land located on the edge of the urbanizing St. Louis metro area. The communities surrounding the airfield complex form one of the fastest growing sub-regions of the St. Louis metro area.

The health and welfare of the surrounding communities are inextricably linked with Scott AFB. Not only does the base have a major impact on the economic vitality and social well-being of the surrounding communities, these same communities have a major impact on the future viability of Scott AFB. Since the communities’ possess authority over land use and development decision-making around the base, their decisions will either prevent or encourage development encroachment in sensitive areas around the base. It is this inter-dependency between the military and civilian communities and the vital influence each has on the other that is the focal point for establishing a regional plan and an on-going process of consensus building and cooperation between the communities and the base.
The Threat of BRAC and the Region’s Response

The Department of Defense, through its BRAC Commission, has closed or re-aligned many military installations during the past 20 years, including BRAC rounds in 1988, 1991, 1993, and 1995, which included a total of 97 major base closures and 55 major re-alignments, along with 235 minor base closures and re-alignments nationwide. In 2005, another BRAC round was conducted, with there being another 33 major base closures and 29 major base re-alignments, along with 774 minor closures and re-alignments.

1995 BRAC

The first three rounds of BRAC closings in 1988, 1991, and 1993, did not generate the concern about the viability of Scott that the 1995 BRAC did. During the 1995 round of closings, there was considerable nervousness among local leaders that Scott AFB could become a target for closure or major re-alignment by the U.S. Department of Defense. While the BRAC Commission did not choose to close or re-align Scott during the 1995 BRAC round, it did point out that rapid encroachment of private development around the base was becoming a major concern and, if not checked by the local communities could pose a serious threat to Scott’s long-term viability. If development was allowed to encroach, or “grow” right up to the base or within its overfly areas, mission capabilities could be significantly harmed because encroachment could restrict the amount of usable airspace needed by Scott. Consequently, this threat has been treated as a serious concern by the local communities. As a result of Scott AFB’s low ranking in the 1995 BRAC compared with other Air Force bases and concerns about Scott’s survival in future BRAC rounds, political, business, and civic leaders throughout the Metro-East, and indeed, the St. Louis region, began working together in earnest to protect the base by helping broaden its mission, by gaining greater community support for the base, and by giving greater attention to protecting it from development encroachment.

In the aftermath of the 1995 BRAC round, several communities surrounding the base, including St. Clair County, began formally addressing the encroachment issue by adopting their own development guidelines for controlling private development around the base. For example, in 1995, the County established an O-3 Overlay Zone that restricted land uses within noise and accident potential zones around the Scott AFB/Mid America airfield complex. The City of O’Fallon enacted in 1998 an Airport Environ Overly Zoning Ordinance which established Accident Potential Zones, Noise Zones, and height restrictions in those areas within the City’s land use control. The City of Mascoutah also enacted zoning and planning controls in its overfly impacted areas, as did the Village of Shiloh. Individually, these communities were acting in proactive ways to address the encroachment issue identified as a red flag in the 1995 BRAC, however, they were not working
collectively to coordinate their responses to encroachment, which resulted in great variations in their approaches to zoning and development regulation within the area. This lack of cohesion and coordination made it difficult for the communities, Scott AFB, and the private development community to understand the various regulations and requirements being imposed. This lack of coordination pointed out the need for Scott AFB and the surrounding communities to engage in a cooperative planning process that would provide greater consistency and effectiveness in the regulations imposed around the base.

1998 Land Use Plan and Joint Airport Zoning Board Proposal

As a result of the “near miss” in 1995, and to better deal with encroachment from a regional perspective, in 1998 a regional land use plan for the area around Scott AFB was prepared by Woolpert Consultants and subsequently adopted by the St. Clair County Board. Its goal was to prepare a regional development plan covering the communities around the base, specifically Belleville, Lebanon, Mascoutah, O’Fallon, and Shiloh, to help preserve the future growth, expansion, and mission capabilities of both Scott and Mid America Airport.

One of the primary recommendations of the study was to have each surrounding community and the county uniformly adopt an Airport Environments Overlay Zoning District (AEO) that would cover all land around the base. Another major recommendation was to create a powerful intergovernmental authority to be known as the Joint Airport Zoning Board (JAZB), which would be comprised of local elected officials from the surrounding affected communities, including St. Clair County, with the County providing staff support for the JAZB. The Board would have had full authority to make final decisions regarding land use, zoning, subdivisions, and building permits within the AEO district and would have played an advisory role on issues and projects within a 3-mile radius of the AEO. Decisions of the JAZB would have been binding and could not have been overturned by the local governments.

The ceding of full land use authority by each city to this independent JAZB became very problematic, and after more than a year of discussion and debate, the communities determined the JAZB was not politically feasible. The failure of the JAZB concept to gain approval also led, in large part, to a loss of momentum in the overall regional planning effort, which eventually ceased, at least formally. Individual communities did adopt some parts of the Sub-Area Plan into their local plans and zoning codes, and the regional plan, although not fully
implemented, was successful in helping educate the communities about how development can affect the base. The effort was also useful in planting the seeds of trust and a more effective working relationship between the communities, which became even more important in establishing a basis for the 2008 JLUS Study.

2005 BRAC
In 2005, another round of BRAC actions were proposed, and as a result of the lessons learned in prior BRAC rounds, the region and Scott were better prepared to address the closure selection criteria established by the 2005 BRAC Commission. Of the four key military evaluation criteria established by the 2005 BRAC Commission, availability and condition of land/airspace had been specifically addressed by the region and its communities. In addition to the military criteria, other “general review” criteria included the economic impact of the base on surrounding communities, plus the ability of the “receiving” communities to handle additional personnel and missions with their infrastructure and economies. Eventually, the Commission decided to keep Scott open and to even move additional missions and commands to the base. As a result, Scott AFB will receive approximately 1,200 additional civilian and military personnel between 2008 and 2011, taking total employment to over 15,000.

While the decision-making process of the BRAC Commission was not available for public scrutiny, it is clear that the collective work done by the region’s leadership to support the base and its local communities made a difference in the outcome. Creating a joint-use facility with MidAmerica airport, providing greater local development controls to prevent encroachment, and working with the state and congressional delegations in finding additional funding and missions for Scott all played vital roles in creating a more diversified mission for the base and in establishing a more cooperative, supportive environment among the local communities.

2008 Joint Land Use Study (JLUS)
In the wake of the 2005 BRAC successes, St. Clair County approached the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) and its Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) program, and subsequently received funding in 2008, to once again initiate a regional effort to coordinate the land use planning and development regulations around Scott AFB and MidAmerica Airport. The consultant for the project, which is currently underway, is EDAW, and the parties participating are the City of O’Fallon, Village of Shiloh, City of Mascoutah, City of Lebanon, St. Clair County, MidAmerica Airport, and Scott Air Force Base.

The overall purpose of the DOD JLUS Program is to create an on-going community-based framework for land use planning around military installations. The JLUS process encourages residents, local decision-makers, and installation representatives to examine current and foreseeable land use conflicts and develop collaborative solutions that balance military and civilian interests. Primary goals of the JLUS are to improve regional planning, communication, and implementation to protect the interests of both the installation and the surrounding community. The 2008 Scott AFB JLUS Plan seeks to:

- Provide clear guidance that identifies options for compatible development around the base and airport;
- Increase communication among the military, the Airport and surrounding communities and residents;
• Evaluate the potential impacts of current and future military and airport operations on surrounding communities;
• Evaluate the potential impacts of community growth on the long-term viability of Scott AFB and MidAmerica St. Louis Airport; and
• Recommend action items to reduce encroachment and facilitate future collaboration.

The 2008 JLUS plan was very different from the one developed in 1998 in that the previous effort was more staff and consultant-driven. The 2008 JLUS Plan has had much greater involvement and cooperation between the mayors, county board chairman, and the wing commander. By having a larger planning and decision-making role for them, the recommendations of the 2008 plan would have more credibility and accountability. Rather than creating another plan that could “end up on the shelf” as so many plans seem to do, a main goal for this plan was to have the leaders of the communities, the county, and the base formally sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreeing to adopt ten key principles, followed by adoption of a consistent set of ordinances and policies flowing from the JLUS recommendations. Underpinning this high level of local commitment was an understanding by all parties that protecting and enhancing Scott was of critical importance, requiring a commitment to cooperate and act with one voice.

As described earlier, the groundwork for cooperation and trust between the communities developed over a period of years by working together on other efforts of mutual importance, especially through an organization known as The Scott/Mid America Leadership Council. It was founded by Mayor Gary Graham of O’Fallon, Mayor Jim Vernier of Shiloh, Mayor Gerald Daughtery of Mascoutah, and Mayor Scott Abner of Lebanon, for the purpose of advocating for and supporting Scott AFB and MidAmerica Airport. According to its marketing brochure, the Council’s intent is to “serve as the voice of the communities surrounding (Scott AFB) that advocates responsible economic development while preserving and protecting our interests and the quality of life of those who live, work, and play in our communities. The Council operates under a spirit of cooperation and is committed to responsible growth and operations of both the Air Force Base Mission and Airport Operations, and development surrounding Scott/MidAmerica Airport”. The individual mayors know the critical value of Scott to their own respective communities as well as to the whole region, and
they feel a keen sense of responsibility to do all they can at their level to protect Scott AFB from irresponsible or uninformed local land use decisions.

The year long 2008 JLUS planning process culminated in the development of a technical planning document and a Memorandum of Understanding between the communities. The MOU was an agreement by each mayor, St. Clair County Chairman Mark Kern, and Scott AFB Wing Commander to support Ten Encroachment Reduction Principles, which are:

1. Adopt and Ratify the Regional Advisory Board (RAB)
2. Update Zoning Codes to Include JLUS Planning Areas with Recommended Land Uses and Intensities
3. Adopt or Update Outdoor Lighting Ordinances
4. Encourage Planned Developments Wherever Feasible
5. Adopt Height Restriction
6. Update and/or Adopt Noise Attenuation Standards in Building Codes
7. Require Aviation and Noise Easements on Major Subdivisions and Rezonings
8. Adopt Real Estate Disclosure Policy for Properties in the Planning Areas
9. Build Regional Capacity
10. Continue to Improve Overall Communication and Coordination

The MOU, though not binding, is a good-faith agreement by each community to implement the Ten Principles and to follow formalized procedures of communication between governmental bodies and the base. After agreeing to these principles and signing off on the MOU, each entity will be participating in the 2009 Phase II implementation of the Ten Encroachment Reduction Principles agreed to in the MOU. Through 2009, the consultant, EDAW, will be working with each community individually and then to find common ground around each of these principles. The goal will be for each community to adopt ordinances and land development policies consistent both with one another and with the 2008 JLUS Plan and MOU.

**Key Outcomes and Lessons Learned**

Several important outcomes and lessons learned resulted from the Phase I effort. Building regional capacity for coordinated, on-going decision-making about land use developments was probably the first and most important. This was initially identified as a primary goal of the project, with the hope of ensuring a consistent coordinated process that would survive over the long-term. To help with this, it was recommended that bi-annual meetings of the technical staff and policy makers from each entity be held to discuss issues of compatibility, review how implementation was going and what problems were occurring, and to discuss land development issues around the base in general. The JLUS project was very helpful in building increased trust and better communications between the six entities involved in the process, and the hope is that this can be formalized so that it will survive the duration of the consulting contract. Having an on-going means of communicating and cooperating is crucial to the implementation of the plan and to the long term support of Scott AFB.

Another crucial agreement among the entities was to create a Regional Advisory Board (RAB) to coordinate and review land use decisions around Scott AFB and MidAmerica. The RAB would consist of the chief elected official from each participating community, including Scott AFB, St. Clair County, Village of Shiloh, City of Mascoutah, City of O’Fallon, and the City of Lebanon,
with this RAB serving as a formal conduit for the management of controversial encroachment issues. Although its authority was advisory only and would not supplant that of each individual governmental body, each community was making a good faith commitment to cooperate together around projects and issues that could negatively affect the base. The trigger for convening the RAB will be a finding by the Air Force that approval of a development application is incompatible (based on AICUZ guidance) in the Protection Zone as defined above in the Planning Areas section. Consequently, the issues to be addressed by this board would be those of a very sensitive nature.

As outlined earlier, certain principles generally need to be in place for effective cooperation between communities to exist.

1. Intersecting interests – Clearly, the communities surrounding Scott AFB have interests which intersect with the base and the demographic and economic impact it has on the communities;

2. Expectation of future value from working together – the expected value comes from maintaining and growing this two billion dollar economic engine. The communities realize there is also other value from working together, which includes a strengthening of the relationships between them and a sharing of information helpful to the others.

3. Common or similar geography/proximity – the relatively small geographic area encompassed by the four communities around the air complex.

4. Institutional memory of previous interactions with that community – history with them. Were the experiences good or bad? Is there a level of trust? While the history between the communities has been mixed, including historic disputes about borders and future annexations, most of these disagreements have been put aside and a much greater degree of trust has been developed.

Following is a benchmarking of the 2008 JLUS planning process against the “lessons learned” criteria identified from the Denver COG experience.

(a) Multi-sector involvement is needed – During the last twenty years, coordination between various public, private, civic, and business groups, has been very instrumental in gaining the necessary support to help retain and grow the base.

(b) A culture of collaboration should exist – While there have been historical ups and downs in the relationships between communities, prior regional planning efforts and the work of the Scott/MidAmerica Leadership Council have been integral to creating a culture supportive working together.

(c) Agreement on a shared vision of the region at a high level should be achieved – This has been one of the most important aspects of the successful regional efforts in support of Scott AFB. There has been clear unanimity among all the regional organizations that Scott’s survival and growth is the number one priority of the Metro East.

(d) Committed and networked leadership must champion the effort – The history of successful regional coordination and leadership has been spotty, but recently there have been other successful efforts, including rebuilding the levees on the Mississippi River.

(e) The planning process should engage the citizenry – Citizens have participated through public hearing and various meetings on the recommendations of the JLUS Plan. Having said that, there is broad support throughout the region for Scott, with around 40,000 people being affected directly by Scott’s presence in the region.
A catalyzing crisis occurs – The “near miss” of the 1995 BRAC round was a crisis that galvanized support for the base in all aspects of the region's leadership.

A supportive regulatory environment should exist – The local communities have been proactive in their efforts to regulate land and development around the base, the St. Clair County going so far as to have state legislation passed that would give them authority to use eminent domain to acquire land uses around the base deemed incompatible.

Implementation needs to be voluntary but institutionalized – As evidenced by the MOU, the various parties have all voluntarily signed off on the ten JLUS principles noted earlier.

The plan needs to be flexible for unique areas and/or circumstances – The JLUS plan.

Communities and organizations need to be willing to change – the communities learned from the failed 1998 regional planning effort; they learned about the importance of land use planning around the base, as well as what each community could do to strengthen the base. The seeds planted in 1998 came to fruition in the 2008 JLUS plan.

Don’t need to have authority to have influence – the JLUS process has improved the trust between communities, which has allowed voluntary agreements to be made and signed on to by the communities.

Need champions for the plan from a variety of communities and sources – the champions of the plan include from the four communities, the county, Scott AFB, Dept of Defense, and the local state and congressional leadership, as well as many various private business groups and civic organizations.

CONCLUSIONS

The planning challenges facing the Metro-East in the next ten years will no doubt be many and varied, mirroring those of its recent history. Regardless of what the issues are, the process by which they are addressed is very important. Communities who choose to “go it alone” and not engage in cooperative planning efforts with their neighbors, but rather choose to “fly solo” or engage in destructive competition, will invariably find their challenges increasingly difficult to address successfully.
This case study of regional cooperation and collaboration around Scott AFB provides a useful example for how communities can work together to solve problems of great importance. Having a precipitating crisis helped initiate serious efforts to better manage land use and development around Scott AFB in order to protect one of the largest economic engines in the St. Louis Metro area. The case study shows that in spite of the trust developed through the JLUS, great difficulty exists in asking communities to cede their formal land use power to another body. Communities will most always want to retain their authority. However, it also shows that effective regional consensus building and cooperation based on the model outlined in this essay can result in voluntary, forceful agreements that are entered into voluntarily and that can be as effective, or more so, than through attempts at gaining a formal ceding of power. This is much easier to do when trusting relationships already exist. Getting communities to have an effective level of trust is difficult and usually takes time to build. When relationships between elected officials and other community leaders are supportive and trusting rather than adversarial and destructively competitive, regional cooperation becomes much easier and more lasting.
Endnotes
5. Wallis, “Voluntary Coordination of Regional Growth.”
6. Wallis, “Voluntary Coordination of Regional Growth.”


About the Author

Ted Shekell, serving as Planning Director for the City of O'Fallon, Illinois since 1997, is responsible for coordinating the City's work in comprehensive land use planning, zoning, annexations, and subdivision and development review, including development exactions and open space dedications. He served on the St. Louis Metro APA Section Executive Board from 2000-2004 and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. From 1992-1997, he served as Executive Director of the Southern Five Regional Planning Commission located at Ullin, Illinois, providing assistance to 23 municipalities and 5 counties with their economic development, public infrastructure, housing rehabilitation, and land use planning projects. Mr. Shekell has a Bachelor of Science in Geography from Penn State University and a Master of Urban Planning from the University of Virginia.
Chapter 2
“Historical Sketch:”
Looking Back to the Future

Like comprehensive plans today, the Civic League opened its plan with a brief history of St. Louis and the evolution of its physical development. And like planners today, the authors did not do this just because they thought their readers might find it interesting. They had an agenda. The reason why they wanted to provide what they called an “historical sketch” was to demonstrate that, while St. Louis was one of the most prominent cities in the country in 1907, mistakes had been made and those mistakes would live with the city forever. But the Civic League did not want the citizens of St. Louis to feel despair. What they wanted St. Louisans to realize was that with a plan and foresight they could make their city better.

From the opening sentence of the sketch, it is clear what the Civic League (unlike all of the other sections, an author is not identified for the sketch—but it was probably Kent) was up to. “A glance at the map of St. Louis,” the League declared, “will show a city whose physical development and expansion to the north, west, and south have followed no well-defined plan.” Moreover, St. Louis had paid for this oversight and was continuing to pay for it. Sub-divisions had opened, streets had been platted, and the limits of the city had been expanded “with little thought of future needs of a great metropolis.”

For the Civic League, this lack of foresight was a shame. St. Louis could have been one of the most beautiful cities in the world because of the fan-like flow of the Mississippi and the perfect topography. St. Louis could have had “commodious thoroughfares radiating from a common center or open square in the heart of the city.” It could have had park spaces in the crowded portions of the city. It could have had well-designed public spaces. It could have taken advantage of the wonders of Laclede’s choice. As the Civic League explained, “a city plan which would have prevented many of these irregularities and much of the inconvenience [of the present city]” was now an impossibility. Instead as they told their readers, the city that now existed was “left as a permanent inheritance to the generations who will reside within these present boundaries.”

The Civic League used most of the rest of the sketch to point out that things did not have to turn out as they did. There were numerous points along the way where St. Louisans could have taken control of their future and realized the city’s full potential. In their minds, the situation could have been rectified in 1822 when St. Louis became incorporated or in 1841 after a number of new additions. However, after 1840 St. Louis was growing too fast to be redirected. The steamboat and later the railroad had made St. Louis into a commercial behemoth that was only interested in growth. Echoing Kris Runberg Smith’s insightful essay, the key sin of early St. Louisans from Laclede on, according to the Civic League was that St. Louis had “turned her back on a beautiful river front.” In their conclusion, they muse “if a L’Enfant had been called in consultation early in the century, a comprehensive plan had been agreed upon,” St. Louis would have had open spaces, attractive squares, and radiating thoroughfares. In short, it “might have become a far more attractive city than it is today.” But without even taking a breath, the Civic League made its main point in the very next sentence (which also happened to be the concluding sentence of the sketch) to the citizens of St. Louis—both past and present—“it is not yet too late to profit from past experience and plan wisely for the future Greater St. Louis.”

Smith’s thoughtful essay on St. Louis history tells the story of the creation of the central
city as a fur trading post with market incentives—and how these early forces shaped the region we have today. Rather than join with already existing settlements further south on the Mississippi River, Pierre Laclede created a new settlement that could capitalize on the growing demand for animal pelts. With its commerce tied to the riverfront, the settlement was anchored on prime land and its residential growth began pushing to the west—a pattern that would continue uninterrupted for generations to come. The city was flush with political, economic, and social activity. The fur trade gave way to steamboats, and steamboats gave way to rails and manufacturing. The little 18th century village exploded into a 20th century powerhouse, with populations that continued to push westward—growing more complex and more segregated as it moved. New institutions sprang forth to meet new demands, and the story of a city evolved into the story of a region.

Laura Milsk Fowler complements Smith’s essay well by examining the symbiotic relationship the growth and development on the “Missouri side” had with the growth and development on the “Illinois side.” Just as there were political, social, and economic forces pushing the region westward, so were there forces pushing the region to the east. Fowler reminds us that the earliest inhabitants of the St. Louis region were in the lush rich flood plains of southern Illinois. The Cahokian Indians had established a major urban center there more than 500 years before Laclede set foot in the area, and religious missionaries were establishing posts and communities by the turn of the 18th century. It would not be too long, though, before the inhabitants of southern Illinois became inexorably linked to Missouri’s growing metropolis. St. Louis needed southern Illinois’ bounty, fuel, and land in order to feed its increasing demand for goods, services, people, and space. The region pushed to the east with the same fury as it pushed west—creating political, social, and economic tensions along the way. There would be no modern St. Louis without southern Illinois, and no modern southern Illinois without St. Louis.

Shelley Houk and Howard Rambsy bring east and west together in their interesting examination of the cultural impact of public transportation in the region. The ties that the central city has with its surrounding areas are shown in the travel patterns of its people. Houk and Rambsy use a very basic element of public life—mass transit—to show that it is much more than just common infrastructure. It is a channel for everyday life and it shapes the very culture of this region. There is a desire to be connected across political boundaries. Some need this connection for matters of career, some need this connection for reasons of family, and some need this connection for reasons of recreation. All need this connection in order to pursue good lives. We are reminded that though we are diverse individuals in our personal lives, we come together in public places and in public transportation, thereby sharing in a common experience. We are reminded that it is not just the destination that is important, but the journey is equally important and is a valuable measure of the associated costs.

The final essay in this chapter, by Mark Abbott, is an assessment of planning in St. Louis. It recognizes the truth that there were some significant parts of the region’s planning experience that were done correctly. The city made some smart and appropriate decisions throughout its history—such as capitalizing on steamboat traffic in the 19th century to developing some of the country’s first zoning ordinances in the 20th. Employing the visionary planner Harland Bartholomew (and paying attention to what he had to say) is another success for St. Louis. Though other scholars might disagree, Abbott attempts to make the case that Bartholomew might actually be the man who “saved” St. Louis. In fact, ignoring Bartholomew’s 1948 regional plan might have been the region’s greatest misstep. It’s not enough to come up with great ideas—we must learn to implement them.
ST. LOUIS MOVEMENT
Kris Runberg Smith

With the recent popularity of loft living, for the first time in St. Louis’s long history, middle-class citizens in large numbers are moving back to the city center near the river. Since Pierre Laclede established St. Louis on the Mississippi, residents with means sought to spread out to the fringes, away from the river. St. Louis scholar George Lipsitz argues that “the problem of the city is the problem of difference. The city’s physical enclosures force people to confront one another, to recognize the existence of different classes and different races, of different interests and different tastes.” This has remained true since St. Louis’ founding, and the history of the region reflects the constant movement out from the city center. This relentless centrifuge shaped the area’s built environment, governance, patterns of race and class, transportation routes, and community development.

In 1763 Pierre Laclede founded St. Louis as the center of his fur trade monopoly instead of joining settlers in the already established communities of Ste. Genevieve on the west bank of the Mississippi River or Cahokia on the east bank. Laclede instructed his stepson Auguste Chouteau to lay out a village honoring the patron saint of the current French king, Louis XV. Unlike other regional villages that grew organically as settlers arrived, Laclede imposed a grid with compact lots along three long streets parallel to the river. On the prairie beyond the village, he followed ancient European feudal land patterns as he laid out common fields in long narrow strips, allowing villagers access to farmland while still living in the safety of the village. Laclede boasted that “many advantages were embraced in this site, by its locality and its central position, for forming settlements.”

Besides its physical advantages for growth, St. Louis claimed the seat of government for Upper Louisiana when Spain took control after the French and Indian War. On the west bank of the Mississippi, St. Louisians tied to France and Spain clashed politically, economically, and culturally with the English, then with the Americans on the east bank, dividing the region even more deeply than the river’s swift waters.

By most accounts, St. Louisians ignored their common fields and instead focused their energies on the much more lucrative fur trade, earning the nickname “Pain-court” for its dearth of bread due to the lack of grain. A Spanish official reported that for St. Louisians “Farming gives them little or no
profit, while the fur trade supports them, and even makes some of them rich.” This lack of interest in farming provided surrounding villages like Ste. Genevieve and Cahokia with trading opportunities and prompted the founding of Carondelet near the mouth of the River des Peres. In a fertile valley north of St. Louis, St. Ferdinand de Florissant also supplied produce to the local population. Farmers from as far away as St. Charles and Ste. Genevieve also brought their grain to be ground at Chouteau’s St. Louis mill. Chouteau’s mill pond came to divide the development of St. Louis north and south. That separation remained after the city drained the pond in the 1850s and then laid railroad tracks along its former course. In the 20th century, Highway 40 followed the route, again reinforcing the divide.

The thirty years of Spanish rule ended with Thomas Jefferson’s Louisiana Purchase and St. Louisans became Americans during a ceremony in March 1804. When the United States took control, the entire region had a population of about 10,000 along the banks of the Mississippi. The village of St. Louis still could fit within today’s Gateway arch ground. While commercial development remained tied to the waterfront, residential growth moved constantly westward away from the city center. In 1816 when land speculators created an addition to St. Louis, they continued the street patterns while pushing the village’s boundaries on its western fringe, establishing this model of growth that continues to the 21st century. Always on the fringes, developers hoped to enjoy the economic benefits of the city’s proximity while trying to control undesirable elements endemic to a city. For developer Thomas Allen, this meant in 1848 “no slaughter house, no bawdy house, soap and candle factory, tannery, distillery, ninepin alley or any other offensive business.”

After the United States gained control, governance of the isolated region remained difficult as territorial governors Meriwether Lewis and, later, William Clark tried to appease old St. Louisans concerned about continued control of the profitable fur trade and the legitimacy of their generous Spanish land grants in the face of burgeoning new population of Americans. When, after much rancor over the issue of slavery, the United States admitted Missouri as a state in 1821, St. Louis lost the seat of government to the newly created Jefferson City. As the county government evolved, leading St. Louisans donated land for a permanent courthouse in the city center and in 1828 the first building opened. Within ten years, a population boom forced county government to expand with four additional wings and dome in the center. During continued growth, the courthouse underwent another remodel in 1851 and a new imposing cast iron dome towered over the city. The towering, grand courthouse symbolized St. Louis’ crucial role in the region as it hosted heated political debates and dispensed justice on the western frontier. “Here patriots, sympathizers, Whigs, Democrats, native American and Free Soilers, all congregate.” At times slaves were sold on the steps and the landmark Dred Scott case was first heard in the west courtroom.

The arrival of the steamboat Zebulon Pike in 1817 heralded a transformation of St. Louis from a trade outpost to the “Queen of the West.” St. Louis joined the country’s market revolution as steamboats allowed the quick dispatch of the region’s raw materials to eastern trading partners and the swift receipt of finished goods to be distributed all across the west from the city’s waterfront. St. Louis became the second busiest river port behind New Orleans, and its location made it a critical transfer point on the Mississippi where the large ships coming upriver were forced to unload cargo, which was repacked on smaller, lighter boats to negotiate the shallower waters upstream. By the 1840s, one out of every three workers had ties to the steamboat trade. In the decades before the Civil War, most western goods and commodities crossed the city’s wharves as its trade territory extended north as far as Wisconsin and Minnesota, south to Texas, and west up the Missouri River. When the White Cloud steamboat caught fire in May 1849, spreading flames up the
levee that destroyed over fifteen blocks, St. Louis’s strong trade allowed the city to rebuild quickly.

St. Louis exploded from a modest village to a booming city full of opportunities, drawing transplants from northeastern states and even more from the upper south that soon outnumbered those with earlier French ties. Irish immigrants congregated on the near North side in a neighborhood known as the Kerry Patch and later moved to Manchester Road to work the clay mines at Cheltenham, today’s Dogtown neighborhood. Waves of Germans flooded into the city, establishing nearby communities like Bremen or expanding the city’s hinterland as they created rural villages up the Missouri River. By 1850, 43 percent of St. Louisans hailed from Ireland or Germany and they increasingly influenced the city’s economic, political, and development patterns. As both the native born and immigrant population skyrocketed, the free and enslaved blacks that made up a quarter of the city’s population in 1830 dropped to 5.2 percent by 1850.8

Taken as a whole, St. Louis’ population doubled between 1835 and 1840, and again to over 35,000 in 1845.9

The steamboats on St. Louis’s wharves increased profitability for the region’s agricultural commodities, attracting both immigrants and Americans to the area’s rich farmland. Wagon roads fanning west out of St. Louis improved, allowing closer connections with established villages like St. Ferdinand or the development of new crossroads like Chesterfield or Afton. Market Street extended out from St. Louis, running through the village of Manchester that gave the road its name, and eventually to Jefferson City where the Missouri General Assembly in 1835 established it as the first official state road in the county. Olive Street ran up from the Mississippi, cutting west across the county’s farmland to Howell’s Ferry on the Missouri River across from St. Charles. St. Louis’ hinterlands also encompassed Illinois, accounting for half of all the farm produce shipped in 1840.10

Even as steamboats secured St. Louis’s trading prominence, their supremacy was already being undermined by railroads before the Civil War. Missouri’s long serving and bombastic senator Thomas Hart Benton long advocated for a railroad from St. Louis west and his vision seemed to become a reality with the 1849 charter of the Pacific Railroad Company. The emptied Chouteau’s pond provided the railroad bed west through the city, arriving first to service the clay mines at Cheltenham and next to the newly planned commuter town of Kirkwood. The railroad struggled to extend across the state and, during the Civil War, suffered under guerrilla attacks. It later became part of the Union Pacific system. In 1858, the
Iron Mountain Railroad opened ready access to the rich mineral region to the south, escalating the city’s iron industry. Running south along the river, the railroad provided important connections with Carondelet and Jefferson Barracks. After the war, the line extended and became crucial in rebuilding southern markets for St. Louis. The North Missouri Railroad tightened ties with St. Charles as the line headed west from Market Street, cutting north to Bellefontaine Road and then through Bridgton to the ferry landing on the Missouri. In spite of these advances, as early as 1854, a Chicago paper boasted that the upper Mississippi trade territory’s “affections are already turning from the mother city, St. Louis, to her glorious rival, Chicago.”

For example, two years earlier a line reached Alton that drew downriver freight off the Mississippi before it reached St. Louis, routing it by rail to Chicago and then on to flourishing Northern ports. This and other rapidly expanding railroads eroded the natural advantages that had made St. Louis such a dominant steamboat port. Heavily invested in steamboats, St. Louis’ initial railroad ventures were undercapitalized and poorly managed.

On the eve of the Civil War, tensions and tangled regional ties in St. Louis represented in microcosm the fissures that divided the nation as a whole. Open support of radical abolition was rare in St. Louis with the exception of Elijah Lovejoy, a newspaper editor who became the movement’s first martyr after his death in Alton in 1837. However, the increased migration of Yankees and a rapidly expanding German community transformed support of slavery in St. Louis. Beginning in 1846, the trials of Dred Scott highlighted the rising anxiety when the slave sued for his family’s freedom. In the past, Missouri courts often granted freedom suits but to the Scotts responded, "The times now are not as they were when the former decisions on the subject were made.” Regardless of patriotic sentiments and regional loyalties, the city’s economy depended on eastern capital and manufacturing as the steamboat’s north and south trade routes increasingly shifted to the railroads’ east and west routes connected to the industrializing northeast. This forced many pro-southern businessmen to reject Missouri secession at a specially convened state convention in March 1861.

In spite of the convention vote, Missouri’s pro-southern governor Claiborne Jackson attempted to push Missouri into the Confederacy by neutralizing St. Louis. He secured passage of a bill that took control of the St. Louis police force by placing it under a board appointed by the governor, a structure still in place today. In May 1861, with an eye on the Federal Arsenal in St. Louis, the largest military storehouse in all of the slave states, Jackson ordered the state militia, which included many members from St. Louis’ prominent pro-southern families, to muster in the city. Federal troops, composed of newly recruited German immigrants, marched through the city streets to capture the state militia camped at the city limits, now on the campus of St. Louis University. Tensions rose as city residents with divided loyalties gathered to watch the spectacle that erupted in gunfire. It left dozens dead and provoked continued violence until Union commanders put the city under martial law for the remainder of the war. The city under Union control created a relatively safe haven for refugees, blacks and whites, who poured in to escape the state’s escalating guerrilla warfare.

The war devastated St. Louis’s economy. The blockaded Mississippi River cut the city off from it traditional markets. Southern trade stopped, banks failed, and the city became bankrupt. Martial law complicated trade with the upper Midwest, and St. Louis lost much of that trade territory to Chicago, a shift that had long-term consequences for both cities. The Civil War erased forever the social and economic vestiges of Old St. Louis and the city’s title of “Queen of the West” now clearly rested on the head of Chicago. After the war, the city flourished but its dominating role
in the West would never be recaptured.\textsuperscript{15}

After the war, St. Louis businessmen launched vigorous schemes to regain their lost markets and create new ones in the Gilded Age. They succeeded so well that by 1880 the city boasted sixth largest in industrial production and claimed to be the fourth largest in population. The city reestablished trade territories even as distributors increasingly turned to manufacturing their own products, like George Warren Brown who jumped from wholesaling shoes to making them too. The region’s natural resources supported expansion of tobacco processing, breweries, and brickyards. Manufacturers used local iron ore and coal for the production of railway cars, streetcars, and stoves. Industrial growth expanded out from the riverfront along railroads tracks. The city’s industrial success came with high costs, including the generated smoke, smell, noise, and waste. As St. Louis tried to impose regulations, heavy industries like the Niedringhaus Graniteware Mill migrated across the river to Illinois in search of cheaper land, accessible transportation, and freedom from increasing city restrictions.

St. Louis’ symbol of Gilded Age success came with the long-desired bridging of the Mississippi. In 1868, a company headed by river man James B. Eads began bridge construction at the foot of Washington Avenue, which would connect at the railroad terminal in East. Louis. Using innovative techniques such as caissons, new materials like steel, and novel arch designs along with political savvy against competitors, Eads created a tour de force still celebrated today. When it opened in 1874 with a 14-mile long parade, a booster announced that the bridge was “A massive and enduring bond of union between the great East and no less great West.”\textsuperscript{16} Robber baron Jay Gould quickly seized bridge ownership, but in 1889, St. Louis railroads joined forces to gain back control and create the Terminal Railroad Association. The TRA, which still controls St. Louis railroad bridges today, then constructed the magnificent Union Station in 1894. Soon, it would draw more rail lines than any station in the nation.

During the Gilded Age, the city’s functions increasingly separated. Along the river and railroad tracks, St. Louis’ multiplying industries drew immigrant labor that crowded into neighborhoods near the factories. Soulard, south of downtown, first attracted Germans, who created a dense neighborhood as they walked to work at the factory but also to shop, to go to church, and to socialize at the meeting halls. As they prospered and moved out, successive waves of Czechs, Slovaks, Croatians, and Lebanese remade Soulard’s institutions and shops to reflect their own traditions. At the same time, the growing middle class
continued the St. Louis tradition of moving west from the river and the density of the city in search of the rural, healthier, and controllable fringes by taking advantage of expanding streetcars routes. Beginning in 1859 when the first horse-drawn street railway opened, tracks began snaking out from the city center to the city limits and beyond. By 1881, almost 120 miles of tracks carried millions of passengers. Commuter train service provided even further escape from the city’s cacophony to planned communities like Kirkwood, first laid out in 1858. In 1892, developers dubbed Webster Groves “queen of the suburbs,” promising families the vigor of country life while the head of the household could commute to the city. This contrasted with neighboring North Webster, a black self-contained community dating back to the Civil War. Railroads also transformed rural communities. When the Wabash line constructed a spur linking Ferguson directly to St. Louis’ Union Depot, its population exploded from 185 in 1880 to 1,200 in 1894. With the cycles of growth westward, developing residential areas encouraged other businesses; more retail services in turn attracted more home builders. 

Beginning as early as 1820 when William Carr built a mansion on the city fringe using deed restrictions to limit other growth, exclusive neighborhoods established the western boundaries of development. In the 1860s with Benton Place in Lafayette Square, speculators began creating private streets where deed restrictions segregated the rich from the poor along with gritty commercial ventures. Wealthy enclaves in the Central West End, Clayton, and then Ladue in the 1930s leapfrogged west as unwanted growth and streetcar lines intruded again and again. The middle classes followed, populating new less dense city neighborhoods and then suburbs as they sought cheaper land, quieter neighborhoods, and more predictable lives. 

Even with westward growth into the countryside, in 1870 the city still claimed 80 percent of the county’s population, but became increasingly frustrated by the lack of any real control over the government where rural residents held the majority. As early as 1848, talk began about separating, and in 1858, St. Louisans tried in earnest to consolidate with the county after it imposed an “exorbitant tax on the people.” The costs of the Civil War only exacerbated the tension and as St. Louis transformed itself into a modern urban city, resentment against the rural county control compelled the city to consider its options. After several years of rancor, a new state constitution in 1875 allowed the city to separate from the county with a home rule charter. Before St. Louis turned its back on the county, it expanded it borders out to just west of Skinker Boulevard, conveniently encompassing the new Forest Park, and then stretched out north and south along the river to encompass the expanding industrial areas. Some city folks argued that the city overreached, encompassing too many “diverse and sundry cornfield and melon patches.” A close, controversial, and contested vote in 1876 granted a “divorce” between county and city. The county promptly designed a new official seal featuring a plow, a potent rural symbol in strong contrast to dense, urban St. Louis. The city claimed the grand iron-domed courthouse, casting adrift county government which first met in Maplewood, then Des Peres and out on long Olive Road, until Ralph Clayton gifted land on Hanley Road for a permanent courthouse. Back in the city, a pro-business committee created a new charter, heavy on governmental checks and balances and light on mayoral power. At times since the great divorce, both the county and the city have thought better of the split, but efforts to reunify proved futile. 

In 1902, a best-selling national magazine ran an article that began “St. Louis, the fourth city in size in the United States, is making two announcements to the world: one that it is the worst governed city in the land; the other that it wishes all men to come and see it.”

Even as former
Governor and Mayor David Francis’ protracted, dogged efforts to secure a World’s Fair for St. Louis were on the edge of fruition, the article lamented contrasts between new imposing landmarks like the Union Station and City Hall with neglected city functions, including the lack of street lights and paved streets, neglected parks, and the “liquid mud” flowing out of the water taps. Like other Gilded Age cities, a political boss ruled St. Louis, directing development based on bribes known as “boodle.” St. Louis rallied with the help of zealous circuit attorney Joseph Folk, who prosecuted the worst of those involved in city corruption, while Progressive Mayor Roland Wells took on the task of cleaning the water supply and myriad other civic improvement in time for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition which opened on April 30, 1904. Occupying half of Forest Park and all of the new Washington University campus, St. Louisians produced the largest World’s Fair, boasting nine hundred buildings and featuring twenty-two countries. Twenty million visitors wondered at the white palaces filled with the latest the country had to offer, lush lagoons, a working coal mine, a giant bird cage exhibit from the Smithsonian, and the 1904 Olympics.

To follow up on the reforms begun for the World’s Fair, the Civic League formed and in 1907 produced the first formal plan to impose order and control over the dense and aging 19th century city center. Reformers argued that a better city landscape would improve its citizens, so St. Louis government increasingly became involved in engineering the urban fabric. A 1923 city bond started clearing decayed, dense city blocks, eventually replacing them with public plazas running from Union Station down to towards the river front including the Civic Courts building, Kiel Auditorium, and Veteran’s Memorial. Plans for an increasingly obsolete waterfront with its 19th century warehouses, ill-suited to the needs of rail and truck transportation, began to be made manifest when city officials convinced the federal government during the Great Depression of the need for a Jefferson National Expansion Memorial and began clearance along the levee in 1934 with New Deal money.

If St. Louis embraced the planning ideals from northern cities engaged in progressive reform, it also adopted the South’s growing practice of segregation, which accelerated as the city’s black population rose with the Great Migration, from 6.2 percent in 1900 to 9 percent in 1920. Through deed restrictions and real estate red lining, migrants from the rural south were primarily limited to two black neighborhoods. In Chestnut Valley, along Market Street west of 20th, a rich and lively musical and entertainment business thrived in spite of the crowded and
unhealthy conditions caused by aging and neglected building stock. Middle-class blacks increasingly settled in The Ville neighborhood west and north of the city center. Anchored by Sumner High School, Poro College, and in 1937, Homer G. Philips Hospital, The Ville’s black population grew from eight percent in 1920 to 95 percent by 1950.21

The expanding economy after World War I allowed the transformation of the rural countryside into rings of ever-expanding suburban communities. Even as the region’s streetcar systems reached their heights, the automobile made possible growth of suburbs far from the trolley and train lines. In the 1920s, the American dream of a rural home, away from the crowded urban core, came into the reach of more city families who became home owners for the first time in new city subdivisions like Holly Hills and St. Louis Hills to the south and Penrose to the north. Just beyond St. Louis’ boundary, University City, birthed with the 1904 World’s Fair by a publishing entrepreneur and schemer Edward Lewis, experienced new growth based on the architectural planning ideals of the 1920s. Out along Natural Bridge Road, the Normandy area grew rapidly and eventually divided into 14 separate municipalities. During the 1920s, the county’s population increased 300 percent. Through 1950, population in both the city and the county grew — but the county’s population grew exponentially. Businesses followed the residential expansion as the rural landscape increasingly succumbed to suburban growth.

As the county spread out in the 1920s, downtown St. Louis grew upward, becoming as dense as Chicago or Boston, with skyscrapers like the 28-story Southwestern Bell Telephone Building.22 Further west, the Continental Building towered over the Midtown area in 1928 where theaters, exclusive private clubs, fraternal organizations and churches built imposing edifices along Grand Avenue and Lindell Boulevard. Professional offices and commercial establishments followed, escaping the city center’s aging infrastructure and diverse population. For the first time, downtown faced competition as the heart of the city seemed to move west to Midtown. However, less than a year after the Midtown area’s glittering Fox Theater opened its doors in 1929, the effects of the Great Depression brought most city expansion to a halt. While St. Louis’ varied economy provided some protection, it could not balance out the financial devastation that hit especially hard throughout the city’s agricultural hinterlands. By 1933, St. Louis’ unemployment numbers rose above the national average to 30 percent, with the black community suffering even higher numbers. One of the largest Hoovervilles in the country evolved along the waterfront, reflecting the region’s hardships.23

St. Louisians went back to work as the city’s industries geared towards war production even before the United States entered World War II. St. Louis city alone acquired $2.3 billion in war contracts, more than half the total for the whole state, with the county receiving $54 million and St. Charles County $235 million. Much of the region’s industries supported ordnance, producing small arms, ammunition, bombs, and plane components. Aircraft companies flourished, prompting improvements to Lambert Municipal Airport in 1942.24 The war plants drew both rural blacks and whites in search of higher wartime wages. Black workers gained greater access to skilled jobs and more equitable pay thanks to the Fair Employment Practices Commission, but enforcement required activism and even mass protests, especially at the city’s largest employer, the massive St. Louis Ordnance (Small Arms) Plant.

World War II accelerated the population shifts that had begun in the 1920s. While upper and middle-class city dwellers increasingly sought more modern suburbs, in the city they were not being replaced by immigrants as in the past. The county population, which doubled during the 1920s, continued to rise even through the Depression, with University City tripling in size and Richmond
Heights jumping 40 percent. After the war, this movement was escalated by the federal government, especially through the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration, which supported mortgages for new homes. However, the new construction occurred far from the vibrant city neighborhoods that officials now declared blighted, making them ineligible for federal support.

With federal support after the war, scores of new municipalities incorporated in the county. Charles F. Vatterott developed the community of St. Ann in 1948, modeled on the planned, mass-produced east coast Levittown. Located near the defense plants around the airport, Vatterott built more than 5,000 homes, creating a self-contained community that included a church and commercial activities along St. Charles Rock Road and was marketed to Catholic families. The established rural community exploded with growth as developers bought up and transformed farmland throughout the county. Between 1950 and 1970, 16,000 homes were built in Florissant, skyrocketing its population from 3,737 to 65,908. Manchester, a sleepy crossroads for more than 100 years, incorporated in 1950 as subdivisions of ranch homes prompted the village to expand its infrastructure and city service, and the area population tripled between 1960 and 1990. Rapid population growth even spread across the Missouri River when the Blanchette Bridge opened in 1958, prizing isolated St. Charles for development. Population doubled in just two years, quickly transforming St. Charles from a village into a commuter suburb.

County homebuyers were not interested in recreating the dense neighborhoods of the city, and even established cities like Webster Groves or Clayton seemed too urban. County newcomers chose to incorporate new communities, where they believed that through restrictions and zoning they could maintain an idyllic pastoral lifestyle, following the example of Ladue created in 1936. A vision of home as rural retreat extended to 1995 with the incorporation of Wildwood. This proclivity towards restricted growth led to the incorporation of more than fifty communities in the county between 1945 and 1952. By 1959, St. Louis County contained ninety-eight separate municipalities. Along with the escalation of the residential communities, retail shifted from the city center to new malls like Jennings’ Northland Shopping Center in 1955 and, to the southwest, Crestwood Plaza Shopping Center in 1957.

Expressways carved out earlier from the city to the county expanded with the Interstate Highway Act of 1956. Especially the I-70 route, begun in 1956, and I-55 route, begun
in 1960, caused much contention as they sliced diagonally across neighborhoods against the street grid. When Highway 40 went through the central city neighborhoods, it contributed to a population drop from 25,000 in 1950 to less than 9,000 in 1960, with African Americans making up 75 percent of those relocated. Construction took its greatest toll on black and poor neighborhoods as routes through neighborhoods like Soulard and Hyde Park cut the community fabric and forced the removal of hundreds of families, many who joined the migration to the county. As the new interstates encouraged St. Louisans to take to their cars, the private firms that provided public transportation saw their revenues shrink, and by the early 1960s, Bi-State, a regional agency formed after World War II, assumed management of the region’s bus (and the soon to disappear streetcar) public transportation systems.

As the county’s population tripled from 1940 to 1957, the city’s population remained fairly constant, reaching its peak of about 850,000 in 1950. However, it soon plummeted as the city was unable to compete with county residential and commercial development, hamstrung by outdated building stock, aging infrastructure, and a social diversity that newly incorporated county communities could carefully zone out. African Americans increasingly fought against the restrictions that created segregated enclaves, claiming legal victories like the landmark Supreme Court case, *Shelley v. Kraemer*, in 1948. At the same time however, racism and government disincentives contributed to white middle-class flight from the city, which accelerated as property values sunk.

Even before sharp population decline, St. Louis officials juggled myriad plans and programs to recreate the city. They began by declaring half of the city’s residential areas blighted or obsolete, then moving aggressively towards public intervention rather than relying on private forces. The waterfront clearance and anticipated Gateway Arch spurred more clearance projects that officials hoped would transform the ragged city core into a more promising real estate. “Progress or Decay,” a *St Louis Post-Dispatch* series in the early 1950s, gained support for more public money for massive urban renewal projects that promised a revitalized city core. Supporting and influencing city renewal was Civic Progress, a private organization of the business elite formed in early 1950s. Downtown renewal began south of the Arch grounds and included Busch Stadium that opened in 1965 when home plate was moved from old Sportsman’s Park on north Grand. West of downtown, the massive Mill Creek slum clearance displaced nearly 6,000 black families along with businesses and social institutions. Many families moved to outlying inner suburbs, while others
moved into high rise public housing buildings, including the infamous Pruitt-Igoe, which consisted of 33 eleven-story buildings ill-suited for community life.\textsuperscript{26}

The shift in population, development, and services from the central city required new initiatives to fund and administer services once concentrated in St. Louis. In addition to Bi-State, voters agreed on the creation of the Metropolitan Sewer District first approved in 1954, a junior college district in 1962, the East-West Gateway Coordinating Committee in 1965, and the Zoo-Museum Tax District in 1971. More comprehensive efforts for governing the region remained elusive.

By the end of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the relentless movement away from the city core and the Mississippi River that began two hundred years earlier left the region with fragmented communities and counties competing for population and commercial development. In 2000, the city could claim only 15 percent of the region’s population down from 60 percent in 1950.\textsuperscript{27} In spite of decades of effort for urban renewal and economic development plans, St. Louis now shares the political, social, and economic roles it once dominated in the region. The city of St. Louis can claim a rich and storied history, from its French Creole foundation, its mercurial rise brought by the steamboat, its exuberant Gilded Age development, and the fabled 1904 World’s Fair. But as suburban patterns now dominate the metropolitan area, this traditional biography is no longer adequate for new generations in the metropolitan region who call themselves St. Louisans but understand no connection to the city beyond the sports arenas and entertainment opportunities. St. Louis city and its surrounding counties share a rich heritage, and a more critical examination about how relationships changed over time could offer insights into how they might change again in the future. Such a narrative is difficult at best; however, to paraphrase historian William Cronon, St. Louis city and the surrounding regions “have a common history, so our stories are best told together.”\textsuperscript{28}
Endnotes


10. Primm 159.


12. Cronon 305.


15. Cronon 301.


17. Primm 192.


21. Fox 152.


27. Eric Sandweiss 236.

28. Cronon xvi.
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About the Author

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Residents of and visitors to the St. Louis area cannot avoid the constant reminders that the Mississippi River is more than a geographic boundary. The “Missouri Side of the River” and the “Illinois Side of the River” carry with them two distinct cultures and emotional boundaries much wider than the water. How did Illinois acquire such a distinct identity? Why is a region only thirty miles away from the city of St. Louis seem like another world? Native inhabitants used the river as a fluid border but recent memory shows a history defined by state boundaries and political culture. Writing in 1915, historian Graham Taylor recognized that the Mississippi River created natural, geographic, and political boundaries that made it, “easy, therefore, to understand why a city plan for St. Louis and its environs has nothing to do with the region across the river…” though the St. Louis plan included “detailed schemes” for areas “much further distant on the western side.” He concludes by commenting that in a modern industrial economy, the arbitrary border of the Mississippi River inhibits growth and that both St. Louis and Illinois should recognize their capital collaboration. I argue similarly, that the Illinois side of the St. Louis region would not have developed except for its symbiotic relationship with St. Louis and her industries. Whether or not the Plan of St. Louis addressed bi-state issues, Illinois owes much of its modern identity to this industrial connection. This essay traces the development of southwestern Illinois from a loose community of agricultural towns to a cohesive string of industrial “satellite suburbs” that fostered the lives of immigrants, capitalists, and entrepreneurs.

Early recorded history places the Cahokia Indians’ civilization in contemporary Collinsville, Illinois. Often referred to as the American Bottom, the land provided ample forest, wetland, and animal life to foster an active civilization. Appropriate for the Cahokia Indians, Cahokia supported a complex urban environment and served as a center for trade with other Indian groups from 800 – 1200 A.D. Though the cause of their demise is still unknown, deforestation, overpopulation, pollution, and disease were contributing factors. By 1500 A.D., Indians again settled in the American Bottom. Most migrated down from what would
become Michigan and possibly intermarried with remaining descendants of the Mississippian culture. Known as the Illini, these Indians comprised a large conglomeration of tribes, some of which included the Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Peoria, Michigemea, and Tamaroa. Named the Illini by the Miami, the French later used the term Illinois. Forced to defend land against competing tribes (Sauk, Iroquois, Kickapoo, Fox, Miami, Shawnee, and Huron), the Illini’s population declined by the time the French settled in this region in the 1670s.³

European settlement of colonial Illinois began in earnest after the French declared the entire Mississippi watershed area its land in 1682, though official expeditions began as early as 1673 when Father Jacques Marquette and fur trader Louis Jolliet surveyed the landscape.⁴ Prior to the official announcement, French fur traders meandered down the various waterways to the Mississippi River to connect trade routes in New Orleans with those in the upper Great Lakes region. Working with the native Indian populations, French trappers frequented Illinois country and cemented it as an essential locale in the French North American network. French life in Illinois country was rich and diverse, leaving a lasting imprint on the land and culture in the American Bottom. Because of tumult with northern Illinois Indians, the French concentrated their settlement in southern Illinois and established the towns of Cahokia, Prairie du Rocher, and Fort de Chartres, in addition to Kaskaskia.⁵

Father Jacques Marquette established the Mission of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin 1675. Though illness drove him from Illinois soon after, the mission remained and Jesuits soon became the largest landowners in the region. It had two other locations before it settled at Kaskaskia in 1703. Believing that the Illinois Indians were especially receptive to Christianity, Jesuits worked with the native populations believing that they were saving souls.⁶ Historian Christopher Bilodeau argued that the French Jesuits thought the Illinois Indians received their message because the Illinois’ spiritual belief system already contained elements that easily translated into Christian principles. Similarly, the Illinois Indians embraced French traders and residents easily into their land. Sometimes referred to as “trading post Indians,” the Illinois saw benefit in collaborating with the colonists. The Illinois embraced the military protections and economic incentives brought by the French, and this in turn gave the French colonists the belief that the Illinois were interested in converting wholesale to Christianity. While the Illinois seemed to endorse the French religion, they did so on their own terms.⁷

French society also left a lasting impression on the landscape. The habitants – French colonists living in Illinois – settled in nuclear villages and farmed community long lots perpendicular to the Mississippi River. Close village living added security and comfort to the habitants while the long lots best utilized the fertile soil, which supplied grain for the entire French colony in North America. Aerial photographs taken today can still ascertain remnants of these ribbon fields amidst the postage-stamp lots surveyed by the British.⁸

Illinois country remained reasonably isolated from other European interests in North America until the Seven Years’ War (1756) highlighted the Ohio Valley and westward expansion of the British. The Treaty of Paris ended the War and forced the French to cede all land east of the Mississippi River to the British. (New Orleans went to the Spanish.) Illinois then officially became British land, though the English colonists ruled from afar. French and British lifestyles were quite different. Land use probably best exemplifies the differences between the two cultures. French community farming and nuclear living were seen as vastly foreign to the British who cherished private land ownership and privacy. While it is too much of a generalization to state that the French harmonized with the Indians, British intentions toward the Illini and Iroquois were hostile and antagonistic rather than accommodationist. French habitants, threatened by the British intentions, fled across the River
to St. Louis and St. Genevieve or were absorbed into the mix of immigrants entering the region.

One of the primary ways the French and British differed was in their treatment of slaves. Slavery was a common cultural phenomenon in the period and the French, British, and Indians owned slaves in Illinois country. The French most likely imported African slaves up from New Orleans rather than down from Canada. Jesuits in Kaskaskia were owners of many slaves, and as the primary landowners in the area were also probably the primary slaveholders in the region. By 1732, black slaves comprised more than one-third of the Illinois population from Cahokia to Kaskaskia. Once in Illinois country, black slaves fared better than their brethren in the Caribbean sugar plantations. The climate, diversity of wildlife and crops, and general workload heightened the life expectancy of slaves. Furthermore, the French system enacted the Black Codes, which defined the legal status of black slaves in the French colonies. The Codes ensured that slaves were to be properly housed, well fed, schooled and baptized in the Christian faith, and had permission to marry. Children were to remain with their parents until puberty and slaves were – at least on paper – given the right to take their masters to court if necessary. How well these Codes were advertised throughout the Illinois country and whether they were enforced is a matter of debate. The Louisiana governor banned the import of slaves up from New Orleans in 1747 but reproduction of existing slaves ensured a continuing population of black slaves in Illinois.

When British settlers began to move into their new territory they brought with them different customs and agendas than did the French. Initially, the British has little control over the Illinois territory. Far from the Atlantic, the British sought to control migration by issuing a Proclamation Line prohibiting settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains. Its issuance in 1763, however, was too late to head off settlers who already moved to the frontier, eager to stake a claim in Britain’s new land. Modifying this policy, the British passed the Quebec Act (1774), which restored French laws in the colony, hoping to restore order and tighten control. During the American Revolution, George Rogers Clark dispatched a small army of men to Kaskaskia, convinced the French to ally themselves with the Americans, made valuable treaties with the local Indian tribes, and secured an American presence in the American Bottom. Clark’s memoirs recorded the transaction in matter-of-fact prose:

“…Some individuals said that the town was given up too tamely, but little attention was
paid to them. A considerable number of Indians was encamped in the neighborhood, as this was a principal post of trade, immediately fled; one of them, who was at St. Louis some time after this, got a letter written to me excusing himself for not paying me a visit. By the 8th Major Bowman got everything settled agreeable to our wishes. The whole of the inhabitants took the oath of allegiance cheerfully. He set about repairing the fort and regulating the internal police of the place, etc. The intermediate villages followed the example of the others, and, as a strict examination was not made as to those who had a hand in encouraging the Indians to war, in a few days the country appeared to be in a most perfect state of harmony.”

Illinois became an immediate county of Virginia and threatened British interests in the region. Like the British, the Americans in Virginia had difficulty governing the distant Illinois County. Easterners migrated to Illinois and laid claim to lands held legally by French habitants. Hoping for better treatment than they received from the British, the disillusioned French allied themselves with the Spanish and many moved across the Mississippi River. Virginia gave up control of Illinois County in 1782, but it was not until 1784 that the federal government enacted control over the western edges of America. The 1785 Land Ordinance Act and the Northwest Ordinance cemented land control and created the formula that enabled settlement in Illinois.

The American Bottom held an unusually diverse set of residents from the onset, and these various cultures clashed louder after American control. French habitants were hoping that the American rule would benefit them more than the British did; British alliances remained among some Indian tribes, and Spanish colonial powers loomed just over the Mississippi River. Governor St. Clair, newly appointed, visited the region in 1788 and is the namesake of St. Clair County. This move legitimized his authority in the eyes of the various residents and created some semblance of control. By 1798, there were enough white men to bring Illinois to a new stage of territorial government. William Henry Harrison became governor of Indiana Territory (which included the modern states of Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota) and immediately began to deal with two pressing issues: land distribution and slavery.

Slavery became an immediate issue: the Northwest Or-
dinance banned slavery in these territories but many already owned slaves in the American Bottom. St. Clair reinterpreted the ordinance to mean that no new slaves could be brought into the region, but land speculators and residents argued that a labor shortage demanded slaves. Landowners John Edgar and William Morrison petitioned Harrison and in 1803 the territorial judges created a provision that allowed African American servitude. Unsatisfied, the legislature passed new laws that allowed for long-term indenture for African Americans and their families, in direct opposition to the provisions of the federal government’s Northwest Ordinance. Slavery would continue to be a divisive issue in southern Illinois until the Civil War.  

Land was the other issue that needed immediate redress. The Northwest Ordinance also demanded that one own land in order to vote. Land claims, however, were complicated and unresolved from the earliest days of the territory, as British and American settlers squatted on French land and vacated Indian treaties. Surveyors plotted out townships and lots in preparation for formal land sales. Edwardsville hosted the third territorial land sales office, which opened in 1817. Squatters negotiated a settlement whereby they had the right of first refusal for land they already improved, but new migrants would be arriving daily to receive a parcel of land. Land in Illinois was cheap – down to $1.25 an acre for an 80-acre parcel – and those with even modest means could capitalize on the fertile prairie. Speculators abounded and purchased and resold land at a rapid rate. Not all intended to live in Illinois, but many wanted a stake in the territory. Madison County’s first census recorded 717 families with “4,516 souls, of whom 34 were free and 77 servants or slaves.” Edwardsville itself, despite its import as a land sales office, only had “…74 men, 71 women and children…17 servants or slaves and 4 free negroes.” Town officials Benjamin Stephenson and Ninian Edwards owned twelve of the seventeen slaves between them. Though sparsely populated, Illinois territory mustered enough votes to declare statehood in 1818.

Early state residents hailed from French Canada and an internal migration from what was called the “upland south,” former frontiers of Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Maryland, and the Carolinas. Perhaps as many as fifty-four percent came from these western states and had made at least two moves before settling in Illinois. Some pioneers followed the backwoods legacy of hunting while others were of the “planter class” of southern farmers. Solon Buck also identified a third class, those of “enterprising men” who became entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, and merchants. Collectively, these migrants brought their myriad of cultural sensibilities to form a new constitution for Illinois.

Edwardsville elicited verbose descriptions from travelers, including Ferdinand Ernst, a German businessman who traveled through the area in 1819: “…Towards evening of the 27th of July I reached Edwardsville, a pretty town about six or seven miles from the bluffs of the Mississippi and 25 miles from St. Louis. This fertile region is covered with fine farms, where one has opportunity of admiring the astonishing productiveness of the soil. I found the maize from 12 to 15 feet high on an average. The gardens which have sufficient age for fruit settings are luxuriant with peach trees and other fruit trees. The peach is a kind of fruit which flourishes admirably here; the seedling producing fruit in four years, and, almost without exception, bears every year afterward so full that its branches have to be propped. Peach brandy and dried peaches are very common here.” Edwardsville and the rest of southwestern Illinois clearly had the components necessary for building a vibrant community. Land sales from the Edwardsville office were brisk, if not a little complicated stemming from the fact that new settlers had to compete with old squatters and left-over tenants from by-gone colonies. Nevertheless, cheap, fertile land held much appeal to enterprising settlers from the east.

Labor inevitably became a pressing issue on the Illinois prairie. New settlers argued that
slave labor was the only way to efficiently clear the land and make it profitable. Since the Illinois territory had a long history of slave labor, and many of the new residents hailed from southern states where slavery was a cultural norm, it was not unexpected that some settlers fought for the right to have slaves. Many early Illinois residents were worried that westward settlers would bypass Illinois were it free and settle in Missouri because it allowed slaves. They feared that Illinois’ free-state status would put it at a disadvantage at a time when both Illinois and the Missouri territories were vying for permanent residents. Though the state constitution had to abolish slavery in order to be ratified by the federal Congress, (because of the provisions of the Northwest Ordinance) state legislators created loopholes whereby they changed the name of slavery to indentured servitude and passed Black Laws that created contracts of servitude with indefinite terms of service. There was a strong contingency that opposed slavery on the grounds that it inhibited economic opportunity. Many of the settlers left the upland south specifically because they could not compete financially with the southern planter class. They hoped that cheap land would enable them to work their farms on equal footing without slave labor. These two viewpoints would continue to debate the slavery issue well into the nineteenth century. Both sides agreed, however, that Illinois should allow slaves legally in Shawneetown where the salt mine work was deemed to difficult for white laborers.20

Once Illinois became a state in 1818, southwestern Illinois remained essentially an agricultural community, but began to move beyond a subsistence farming existence and entered the larger national marketplace. Most transportation routes were extensions of old Indian trading routes. This left residents and visitors to travel on poorly paved and well established pathways. Merchants enjoyed new access to the east when the Erie Canal opened in 1825. Though still a waterway, goods and services had a more direct link to New York, a new marketplace for Illinois residents. In the 1830s, The National Road, which follows contemporary U.S. 40, made it from Maryland to Vandalia, and investors paved a macadamized road between St. Louis and Belleville, IL. Private toll roads enabled the rest of travel in the region, where the typical distance between towns was six to nine miles. St. Louis boosters banked their future on the continued success of steamship travel and freight transportation on the Mississippi River, but Chicago investors gambled that the railroad would prove the more attractive transportation in the nineteenth century. They were right.21

The railroad did more than provide access for visitors and travelers. The railroad linked markets with farms, allowing farmers in southern Illinois to ship crops to Chicago, the emerging lynchpin in the Midwestern and national marketplace.22 By 1856, the Illinois Central, the longest railroad in the world, connected southern Illinois with Chicago. For the southwestern region, however, linkages with St. Louis were more important to the development of post-Civil War cities on the Illinois side of the River.23 Before long, East St. Louis emerged as the center of a tangled web of railroad tracks and hubs managed by the Terminal Railroad Association. Initially, eastern railroad tracks terminated at East St. Louis until the Eads Bridge opened in 1873, allowing the trains to move over the River, rather than unloading their goods onto a ferryboat. A second bridge, the Merchant’s Bridge, opened in 1889, increasing access between Illinois and Missouri even further. These bridges, ferries, and railroads connected St. Louis’ burgeoning industries with those on the Illinois side of the river and to further points north and east.24

While Edwardsville maintained its character as the county seat and small town, other agricultural communities soon became full-fledged cities once industrialization emerged as a vital thread in southwestern Illinois. Granite City, for example, began as a collection of towns called Six Mile Township. It was not until Granite City Steel incorporated in 1875 that the steel company formed the town proper. Still small, immigrants from eastern and southern Europe came en masse in the
late nineteenth century and boosted Granite City’s population, formally incorporating it in 1898. Supported by heavy industry like NESCO enamel stamping and the steel plant, immigrants formed the corps of the workforce. Other cities also grew of specific industries. Glen Carbon, a comfortable agricultural stronghold, became the company town for the Glen Carbon Coal Company, which erected shotgun housing for its many immigrant workers in 1896. Wood River supported the Standard Oil Refinery, and Monsanto, later Sauget, was the centerpiece of Monsanto’s emerging chemical and agricultural corporation. Finally, East St. Louis held the stockyards, miles and miles of railroad tracks, switching yards, and hubs, and additional industries that supported work on the Illinois side of the River. A boon to cheap labor, fuel costs, and transportation facilities, Illinois’ side of the River became a mecca for industrial capitalism and profitability in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.25

Historian Graham Taylor, writing in 1915, termed these towns “satellite cities.” Like Gary, Indiana, or Pullman, these towns became support systems for the larger industries nearby. In Illinois’ case, St. Louis industries outgrew their welcome on the Missouri side of the River and expanded to where owners thought there was room. Deemed “nuisance industries” by town leaders and private citizens, St. Louis government sought to regulate the dust, dirt, noise, fumes, and waste produced by St. Louis’ many industries. As the city of St. Louis developed into a more complex cultural environment, residents resented the by-products of industrial capitalism and demanded smoke abatement, noise reduction, and clean air. For many reasons, St. Louisians saw open land on the Illinois side and made favorable arrangements to push these nuisance industries away. Lured by tax incentives, cheap labor, cheap fuel, and access to railroad transportation, heavy industry set up shop in southwestern Illinois and cemented its relationship as a satellite to St. Louis.26 The opening of the McKinley Bridge in 1910 further tied St. Louis to Venice, Illinois, a prime location for industry and workers.

These satellite cities in Illinois contained a mix of old institutions and new support systems for recent immigrants. Early and mid-nineteenth century towns were settled by a mix of migrants from the Upland South and from immigrants from Germany and Ireland. In the post Civil War period, especially toward the end of the nineteenth century, immigrants from Hungary, Croatia, Macedonia, Italy, Serbia, and Yugoslavia settled to work in the region’s industrial labor. Granite City created a neighborhood called Lincoln Place also known as “Hungary Hollow” because of the high population of Hungarian immigrants who lived there.
Madison, Illinois housed the Croatian Home, a local meeting house and bar for cultural events, weddings, and celebrations of Croatian residents. One Croatian resident recalled the ethnic diversity of the area: “I didn’t see a lot of conflict. But they were, a lot of the Eastern Europeans were there. I mean the Hungarians were there. Lots of Macedonians. There were some Armenians, but most of those were in Lincoln Place. So, […] but the Macedonians and Armenians are so close, but to them they’re not. I’m trying to think. The slavics, you know, there’s different kind of Slavic. The Czech’s. They were all that eastern heritage. Was there mixed together. But I didn’t see any really, I never saw any fights with the Serbians. It was the comments you heard. Like, ‘Oh, they’re Serbian.’ Not that they, I never saw any physical.”

Like in other industrial cities, immigrants formed the core of the unskilled labor force, working for cheap wages and little protection. The dirty work of steel plants, animal butchers, tanners, railroad switch repairmen, and oil refiners held a captive audience in European newcomers eager for a cash wage. Though smaller in scale than Chicago, Pittsburgh, or New York, immigrants created cohesive communities that met their social, cultural, religious, and work needs in environmental conditions that were less than ideal. Shoddy housing, poor air quality, frequent floods, and subsistence living made day-to-day life challenging. Many Croatian residents recalled the poverty they endured in America. Mary Ann Gensert, whose grandparents emigrated from Croatia, recalled that they came to escape poverty in Europe, but were “as poor as church mice” here too. Her father “…went to the steel mill and did really hard laborer job. There is a place I understand called the, I want to say it’s the icehouse? I have no idea what they did, but I have this funny feeling that they made these big blocks of ice…And, he worked in this icehouse, and it was really hard I understand for him to keep a job. It was hard to support the family. They tell they actually in Madison were allowed to keep animals and that they kept a cow. And you know where State Street is and there’s that field there in Madison. The Commonwealth was right there… My uncle use to take the cow there and graze the cow. And they actually were so poor that they milked and sold the milk to neighbors…”

Though clearly not universal, Mary Ann Gensert’s story tells of a common experience for many residents in Illinois’ industrial suburbs.

The other major workforce population was African Americans, most of who migrated north from the southern Cotton Belt in the early part of the twentieth century as part of the Great Migration. Pushed out by racism, threats to personal safety, and diminishing agricultural opportunities because of the boll-weevil pest and a failed legacy of sharecropping, blacks left the south and came north to cities like St. Louis, East St. Louis, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and New York. East St. Louis’ industrial opportunities and railroad ties made settling here enticing. Black residents had a long history in southwestern Illinois throughout settlement. Free blacks lived in many places throughout the state, though the towns of New Philadelphia, Brooklyn, and Alton held particular importance to African Americans in the nineteenth century. Despite Illinois’ legacy with slavery and the Black Codes, many found it a comfortable and lucrative home. Racial tensions did exist, however, and the influx of African Americans coupled with displaced workers and poverty led to America’s first urban race riot in East St. Louis in 1917. Others would follow in cities like Chicago, but East St. Louis’ riot shook America to the core. The legacy of racism is still evident throughout southwestern Illinois. Some communities still display de facto segregation; Brooklyn, Venice, and East St. Louis hold majority black populations while Pontoon Beach, Madison, and Granite City maintain a white ethnic core.

Focusing on industrial growth has its limitations. When the economy falters, working-class neighborhoods are the first to see the effects. Rust belt recessions in the 1980s affected the region,
and more recently, Granite City Steel shuttered its doors, unsure when it will reopen. Nevertheless, other communities see exponential growth as they morph from agricultural towns to bedroom exurbs of St. Louis. Shiloh, Belleville, Lebanon, Edwardsville, and Glen Carbon continue to see new houses, communities, and services. East St. Louis continues to endure the legacy of racism and poor urban planning that left the city cash-strapped and without essential services. The next hundred years will no doubt showcase growth, resilience, and a new landscape that is not reliant on industrial activities. The history of the region, however, reflects collective corporate endeavors that supported residents and made Illinois a vital component of the St. Louis area.
Endnotes

7. Bilodeau.
16. Buck 84.
17. Buck.


About the Author

Laura Milsk Fowler received her B.A. from University of Wisconsin-Madison and her Ph.D. in Public and American history from Loyola University Chicago. Her dissertation, "Meet Me at the Station: The Culture and Aesthetics of Chicago's Railroad Terminals, 1871-1930," examined the urban culture and public space of Chicago's six downtown railroad terminals. Since 2003, she has been an Assistant Professor of history and Director of the Museum Studies Program at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. She teaches history of Illinois, museum studies, and 20th-century American history. She is currently working on revising her dissertation for publication and on Southwestern Illinois immigration history.
THE LIGHT RAIL AND THE METRO EAST: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES
Shelley Houk and Howard Rambsy II

One September evening last fall, passengers boarded a train at stations along the light rail route in southern Illinois. A father and son, wearing St. Louis Cardinals paraphernalia, boarded from the station at Scott Air force base. A group of students carrying book bags got on the train at the college station at Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC). A mother pushing a stroller with her child boarded at the Belleville station, and a group of young boys boarded at the Jackie Joyner-Kersee stop. As all these passengers coasted along the light rail toward Missouri, they were inclined to take in a common picturesque view of the setting sun collaborating with the St. Louis skyline to create a compelling sight. Despite many differences, the shared regional environment and mode of transportation solidified the passengers’ identities as Metro East light rail travelers.

Since its initial opening in 1993, the light rail transportation system in St. Louis and the Metro East has served as an increasingly important yet understudied force in the cultural life of the region. The light rail provides citizens with unique opportunities for momentary contact with a large number of their fellow residents, increased exposure to the area, and better access to key institutions in southern Illinois and St. Louis. As a result, the light rail serves crucial functional roles and offers a range of rewarding cultural benefits. Notably, those same potential benefits—momentary contact, increased exposure, and better access—stimulate responses of fear and resentment concerning light rail travel and, more generally, public transportation. Ultimately, several factors and dynamic qualities converge to make the light rail a source of enriching cultural growth and troubling contention.

Our essay identifies and illuminates key ways that light rail travel fulfills vital needs and cultural interests of citizens in the Metro East. Our work seeks to fill a gap in scholarship on public transportation by highlighting the cultural implications of light rail travel. Why do so many commuters who own cars prefer to take the light rail to work? How do the expanded mobile capabilities made possible by this mode of transit enhance the lives of residents in southern Illinois? And, how does light rail...
travel in the region raise the possibility of increased cultural participation for citizens? These questions have informed our approach to understanding the humanistic benefits of light rail travel in the region. Several factors, including expanded economic development, increased fares, reduced traffic congestion, and higher taxes, have necessarily been privileged in discussions concerning public transportation. However, our research reveals that citizens could also benefit by considering the intrinsic values associated with light rail travel.

Despite many perceived benefits, light rail travel and public transportation in general have stimulated a considerable amount of tension among residents. Issues related to expansion and increased taxes, as well as popular stereotypes concerning the kinds of people perceived to ride buses and trains, have further stigmatized public transit and its riders. Non-riding residents are reluctant, if not resentful, to contribute tax funds to public transit. Furthermore, concerns about safety and crime in addition to the bad press resulting from mismanagement and legal issues pertaining to MetroLink, the company that operates public transportation in the region, have extended negative views of the rail transit system. An examination of popular media coverage concerning the light rail in St. Louis and the Metro East reveals that the transit system, its officials, and the passengers are frequently the subject of controversy, which helps explain why large numbers of citizens continue to view public transportation in such unfavorable terms.

City planners, social scientists, politicians, and transportation officials have long discussed the merits and pitfalls of public transportation. In their article “Light Rail: Boon or Boondoggle,” for instance, economists Molly Castelazo and Thomas Garrett have provided analyses concerning the financial costs and benefits of light rail transit. The MetroLink’s annual reports and figures released by the American Public Transit Association provide quantitative data about ridership increases and declines. Yet, conversations about the cultural advantages and disadvantages of light rail travel, especially in this region, have received little attention. But then, how might we do more to account for what commuters gain by riding the train to work, and what values are exposed when residents contemplate the meaning of public transportation and specifically light rail transit? Consequently, pinpointing several of the cultural benefits and tensions associated with this mode of public transportation provides an alternative measure of the costs and opportunities made available by light rail travel.
OPPORTUNITIES MADE POSSIBLE BY LIGHT RAIL TRAVEL

For thousands of workers across the Metro East, light rail transit constitutes a preferred mode of travel. According to findings from a 2007 survey of the MetroLink, passengers primarily used the light rail transit system for traveling to work. An overwhelming 85% of surveyed passengers owned cars but selected to take public transport, an indication that riding the light rail constituted a choice and not a necessity. Making this choice suggests that passengers find the light rail more desirable or convenient than driving their automobiles, at least when it comes to their work time travel habits. Gas prices partly explain workers’ travel preferences; however, additional, non-economic reasons also reveal why many southern Illinois commuters who own cars still rely on public transit.

First, the light rail provides levels of reliability and relaxation that could appeal to commuters, especially those seeking to avoid the frequently congested rush-hour traffic between Illinois and Missouri. Annual MetroLink reports show that customers consider the trains operating on time as a main expectation, and they consistently give high satisfaction marks to the on-time performance of light rail service. The dependable on-time service of rail transit in comparison to the often unpredictable flow of rush-hour traffic and construction delays likely make automobile travel less appealing. Thus, the on-time reliability, and not simply fluctuating gas prices and other economic factors, contributes to raising the appeal of the light rail as a preferred commuting option for thousands of automobile owners.

The degrees of comfort that rail transit provides might be less apparent to many non-riders. However, just a few trips along the light rail reveal that the train rides appear to put many passengers at ease. The travelers listen to portable music players; they daydream; and they nap as the train coasts along the rails. The relative quiet nature and typical peacefulness of the commutes seems to create a calming effect for riders. Even when the trains are crowded with passengers during peak hours, individual travelers are content to daydream and nap. No wonder so many car owners choose to take the light rail for their daily commutes. How else, but along the light rail, could they achieve such Zen-like states of peace while traveling to and from work? The feelings of comfort, reliability, and peace that citizens can experience while riding the light rail might explain why workers who own cars continually choose to rely on this mode of transportation.

The use of public transit by commuters from Shiloh, Belleville, East St. Louis, Fairview Heights, and Swansea traveling to Missouri makes the rail transit an especially important site, a mobile site actually, for the convergence of many of the region’s citizens. People with different jobs, varied language styles, multiple fashion sensibilities, and diverse social habits all come together and travel alongside each other utilizing this common mode of transportation. The daily commutes along the light rail represent a moment where a sizeable, fairly balanced mix of the region’s people travel together in close proximity. 44% of the travelers are male; 56% are female; 48% are African American and 45% are white. Passengers who take the light rail are unlikely choosing to take the rail transit system because of its integrated racial and gendered makeup. Nonetheless, the system does offer a unique level of contact between groups of people who might not ordinarily encounter each other.

The brief yet close contact among southern Illinois rail commuters each weekday morning has become an important yet under-acknowledged feature of cultural life in the region. While far less extensive and influential than the subway lines in cities such as New York City or Chicago, the light rail system in the Metro East nonetheless constitutes a significant experience where thousands of citizens from different areas across the region share the common space of public transit to gain
access to various destinations in Missouri. The commute from southern Illinois to Missouri could arguably be one of the few instances when so many different people from the region share such close proximity to each other on a regular basis. Those daily commutes hardly resolve the geographic distance that exists between white and black citizens in the area; however, the light rail travel does constitute a unique site for temporary multi-racial interaction for thousands of workers each weekday.

Whereas commuters represent the majority of the ridership for the light rail, students are also regular passengers on the trains and thus comprise an integral portion of the transit system’s demographic. According to the Citizens for Modern Transit, an advocate group that tracks the growth and expansion of the light rail, ridership “is significantly high for both employees and students.” The light rail offers a vital link to SWIC, local secondary schools, and the Jackie Joyner Kersee Center in East St. Louis, which offers extracurricular educational programs for area youth. Public transit along the railway provides access to these educational facilities for large numbers of students, many of whom have limited automobile options. The regular presence of passengers with book bags and young people wearing school uniforms on the trains confirms the viability of the light rail as a mode of travel for accessing educational sites.

Officials at SWIC have invested in the light rail as one way of making their institution more readily accessible to potential students. By advocating for a train stop on their campus, officials at the community college ensured that their institution was directly available to commuters. In addition, SWIC offers free light rail passes to students, staff, and faculty thereby guaranteeing easier travel to college’s Belleville campus. SWIC’s distribution of free light rail passes alleviates some of the challenges that students would face if commuting by car on a daily basis. The light rail passes also provide students with a mode of transportation that is reliable and accessible. Overall, the on-site light rail and the free passes stimulate increased reliability for the teachers, faculty, and students who commute to college each day.

For many younger students, the light rail serves as a convenient and important mode of transportation for traveling to and from school and attending extracurricular events in Illinois. The Jackie Joyner-Kersee station, which provides direct access to the center, for instance, is a popular destination for school-age children. Large numbers of teenagers from the Metro East frequently make use of the light rail to travel to various destinations in St. Louis. For young people with limited transportation resources, light rail transit offers an important opportunity increased mobility. Often, that increased mobility gives Metro East youth who would otherwise have fairly restricted travel wider geographic access and expanded opportunities for cultural participation in the region.

Sporting events in St. Louis are an integral source of interest and entertainment for southern Illinois residents. Light rail travel offers citizens who wish to attend Rams, Cardinals, or Blues games a convenient way to avoid the hassles of congested traffic and difficult parking. Heavy traffic and expensive parking fees are notable obstacles, so many fans welcome alternative options to driving their cars. Yet, the light rail provides sports fans with more than just an easy way to avoid city traffic. Riding the train gives them opportunities to share in common activities before and after games, which ultimately enhances their overall experiences. Traveling together on the train, fans talk and recall dramatic moments from the game and share the emotions of their team's losses and wins. Sports fans, with their excited anticipation before games and their exhilaration after their team’s big wins, often energize the atmosphere of the trains as travel along the light rail. The trains also operate as mobile, communal sites of sadness as fans travel together in dejected silence after a dramatic loss for the home team. Thus, more than simply serving as a mode of travel to the games, the light rail
provides fans commuting from southern Illinois with important opportunities for bonding. The close proximity between southern Illinois and Missouri has helped nurture a strong fan-base for teams in St. Louis, and Cardinals’ Metro East fans who utilize the light rail are an especially visible and distinctive group. These passengers, with their red baseball paraphernalia, are quite pervasive on game days seeming to redefine the character of trains as important transports for Cardinal supporters. In addition to providing Illinois sports fans access to the stadiums of downtown St. Louis, the light rail facilitates their exposure and participation in the activities and culture of downtown St. Louis, including several restaurants, bars, and local hangouts. Downtown merchants undoubtedly benefit from the patronage of the Illinois customers who gain access to the businesses, eateries, and entertainment venues by way of light rail travel.

The light rail’s function of connecting Illinoisans to St. Louis for the purposes of cultural participation was especially evident on October 18, 2008. Thousands of citizens from the Metro East utilized the light rail to attend a Barack Obama campaign rally at the St. Louis Arch. The trains dropped passengers off only a few blocks from the event and freed them from the difficulty of negotiating traffic and finding parking at a rally that ultimately attracted an estimated one hundred thousand people. The availability and passenger capacity of public transit on the day of the Obama rally made it possible for large numbers of regular, occasional, and first-time light rail travelers to participate in a historic event. According to The Belleville News Democrat, Obama’s visit attracted one of the largest domestic crowds in any presidential election, and Michelle Merlin, writing for Student Life, a newspaper at Washington University in St. Louis, noted that “The Democratic presidential nominee addressed a culturally-diverse crowd, which stretched back to the St. Louis streets in the largest U.S. crowd at an Obama rally to date, on a number of topics related to the economy, including taxes, health care reform, job creation and standing up for the working class.” Although Merlin’s article did not mention the Metro East commuters as a distinct group, thousands of the constituencies alluded to in Obama’s speech had traveled to the rally in close proximity to each other along the common route of the light rail.

First-time passengers who utilized the light rail to attend the Obama rally perhaps gained a greater appreciation for what many regular Metro East commuters had discovered long ago—that the rail transit provides a convenient, reliable, and sometimes essential means for Illinois residents to travel.
to downtown St. Louis. The mood of the trains to the Obama rally were energetic, filled with excited anticipation, not so unlike the energized feelings of excited anticipation that pervade the atmosphere of the trains when they are filled with Illinois Cardinals fans before an important game. Finally, the light rail assisted Metro East citizens interested in attending the rally exercise or increase their cultural participation by serving as a viable mode of transport to and from the event. Notably, assisting with the increased cultural participation of southern Illinoisans by expanding their travel capabilities is arguably the light rail’s most far-reaching benefit, especially for Metro East citizens with otherwise limited transportation options. Without light rail transit, public transportation in general, and the expanded access that the system facilitate, large numbers of citizens across the region would be confined to environments with limited resources and opportunities for growth.

TENSIONS ABOUT THE TRAINS

Despite the many positive attributes of rail transit in the region, the light rail is hardly viewed as favorable by all citizens. Actually, public transportation in general is often seen as a waste of resources and taxpayer money, a stimulus for crime, and an example of authorial mismanagement. Large numbers of citizens perceive light rail expansion as a potential threat to the sanctity of suburban areas. Bring mass transportation from the city to the suburbs, so the thinking goes, and the apparent troubling elements of city-life would travel along the public transit routes as well. Many of the negative views of mass transit and the kinds of people who utilize public transportation likely result from larger, more pervasive cultural conflicts and misunderstandings in society, which have far-reaching effects shaping public opinions.

The tensions and anxieties that emerge in relation to light rail travel can be traced to a relatively small number of negative incidents that have received widespread coverage in the local news media. Notably, Chad Garrison’s *The Riverfront Times’ article* “Out of Control Shoplifting in the St. Louis Galleria. Violent Attacks in the Delmar Loop. Is Metrolink A Vehicle for Crime?” strongly suggests correlations between increased incidents of crime and the expanded routes of the light rail, which unfortunately, at least from the perspectives of many of those quoted in Garrison’s article, gives people from low-income areas more access to the Galleria Mall and shopping venues in the Delmar Loop area. According to Garrison, large numbers of merchants from these locales held the sentiment that “maybe MetroLink actually enables criminals, especially teenage lawbreakers.” This sentiment, noted
Garrison, was similar to views held by St. Charles County residents who voted against a proposal to extend the light rail to their suburb in 1998 after receiving indications that the expanded rail service would, according to one official, “connect Mid Rivers Mall with East St. Louis.”

The perception that expanded light rail services could make commercial districts and prosperous neighborhoods accessible to travelers, especially black travelers from poor environments, creates or stimulates an increasingly negative view of the value of the light rail.

The instances of criminal behavior enacted by light rail passengers are actually quite rare. “According to agency data,” noted an editorial in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, “there were a total of 14 robberies and 24 assaults at the system’s 26 Missouri stations during 2007 — out of 19 million passenger boardings that year. The figures are consistent with national research that shows transit stations are as safe as or safer than the neighborhoods in which they're located.” Nonetheless, fears about threats to public safety and the coverage of individual crimes influence the perception that mass transit in the region could nurture criminal activity and provide travel for unruly, troubling passengers. From the standpoint of the editorial writers at the *St. Louis-Dispatch*, “Irrational fear of crime, sometimes expressed in barely coded racial terms, long has plagued transit systems across the nation. Usually it occurs when systems seek to expand from inner cities to suburban areas.” As the editorial notes, fears of crime often heighten as transit operations attempt to expand. Consequently, the publicity about mall shoplifters who rely on public transportation and the assaults that took place near the Forest Park-DeBaliviere light rail stop in St. Louis during the summer of 2008 increased as discussions were developing about the extent to which St. Louis County should devote tax funds to public transit in the region.

In addition to coverage about crime on the light rail, the publicized legal woes and management missteps of Metro officials have also contributed to tarnishing the image of public transportation in the region. The Cross-County Extension, which includes the light rail route connecting Shrewsbury, Maplewood, Brentwood, Richmond Heights, Clayton, University City, and St. Louis to the main line, went over budget by more than $130 million, and in their losing lawsuit battles with construction companies whom they blamed for some of the costly delays, Metro had to pay “more than $27 million in legal fees and settlements.” These enormous budgetary costs were damaging to Metro’s financial stability as well as the agency’s overall reputation. The tarnished view of Metro and by extension public transportation in the region made it difficult for elected officials to convince taxpayers from St. Louis County to devote additional funds to the transit system.

On November 4, 2008, citizens across the nation cast their votes in an historic election for the next President of the United States. On their ballots, residents of St. Louis County also voted on Proposition M, a half cent sales tax that would support Metro’s transportation system. Despite endorsements from various news outlets for citizens to vote “yes on Prop M,” the proposition failed to pass by a slim margin and thus prevented the transit agency from receiving the support that would “provide funds for Metro operation and expansion, free up funds for critical county road projects, and trigger a ¼-cent sales tax passed by City of St. Louis voters in 1997 which could not be collected until matched by St. Louis County voters.”

The failure of Prop M further guaranteed the continuing struggles of Metro to balance its budget for the costs of operating its transportation services in Missouri and southern Illinois. In the immediate future, the agency will raise passenger fares and contemplate plans for service reductions in order to address its financial shortages. These changes will certainly affect Metro East citizens who make use of light rail transit.

The impending fare increases and reductions in light rail service do not offer a promising outlook for citizens in the Metro East. The eventual decreases in when and where transit operates...
threatens a preferred mode of travel for thousands of weekday commuters, and reductions would restrict the transportation capabilities of Illinois residents from low-income environments who rely on the light rail to gain broader access to educational facilities, entertainment venues, and shopping areas in southern Illinois and St. Louis. Furthermore, service workers, who constitute “an essential cog in the local economy on which all of us depend” rely heavily on public transit, noted an editorial in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch.* The decline of public transportation options in the region, therefore, could lead to a broader range of problems and challenges, not just for those who depend on mass transit. The possibility of such problems and challenges certainly does not mean residents should overlook the misuse of funds by transportation officials. However, just as the financial pitfalls and mismanagement issues of public transit might be taken seriously, so should the cultural benefits.
Endnotes


Bibliography


About the Authors

Shelley Houk earned her Master of Arts in English and American Literature at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, where she is also currently an instructor in English. Her research interests include contemporary feminist literature and urban studies. She serves as an associate coordinator for *The Poetry Correspondence Program*, a letter-writing, poetry sharing initiative, and she is co-director of *Southern Illinois Along the Lightrail*, a humanities project that utilizes a transportation system as the focal point. Soon, she will be moving to Chicago.

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WE DID SOME SMART THINGS, TOO
Mark Abbott

As a “Real Hoosier,” i.e. someone from Indiana, I am constantly amazed by St. Louisans' attitude about themselves. They—we (I now consider myself part of the family since I have been here over twenty years)—almost take an obscene delight in self-flagellation. We seem to enjoy telling the world how bad we are and how we have fallen. It is almost as if we relish saying that we are the most divided, the most economically challenged, the most boring, etc. region in the country.

But I am not buying it. We clearly have some gargantuan problems. Yet it is not guilt or remorse that is driving our confessions—far from it. By pointing out our failings, we hope to excuse ourselves from doing anything about it. Almost like the jeremiads of the Puritans—the sermons they delivered to declare how sinful they were—our declarations of how sinful we are, are really meant to absolve us of any responsibility for really changing. After all, it is a question of fate. The world has passed us by. We will just have to get used to the Denvers of the world taking our place. As sinners, we as St. Louisans, will just have to take solace that we still have the Cardinals.

One of the sins that St. Louisans love to brag about is our lack of planning prowess. We never seem to tire of talking about the debacles of Pruitt-Igoe or Mill Creek Valley. We might have been a great city once—say around the 1904 World’s Fair—but we have made such a sprawling, festering mess of the region, it is now impossible ever to recapture that glory. Again, I am not buying it. Things have not always turned out as we planned (does life ever turn out exactly as intended?) and the region has obviously slipped a peg or two during the last generation or so. However, instead of seeing St. Louis as being a planning failure, I would argue just the opposite. While many would naturally argue that Chicago or New York or San Francisco (any place other than St. Louis) is the Mecca of planning in the United States, I believe that St. Louis is perhaps one of the most important American cities in terms of city and regional planning history.

Certainly, there have been notable failures of planning in St. Louis. But you could make the case that nowhere else have planners been as innovative or as daring, as they have been here. Not only did St. Louis produce the first comprehensive plan—the 1907 Civic League plan which this book is modeled after—it may also have generated the most influential one in the 1947
Bartholomew plan. St. Louis is also the home of the country’s second major zoning ordinance, some of the earliest freeways, and acclaimed success stories of government-developed housing like Laclede Town. Instead of seeing planning as causing the region’s decline, it might be more accurate to perceive it as its salvation. Over the last fifty years, the region has taken two body blows that were not of its making—1) globalization and the decline of American manufacturing and 2) the end of the Cold War. Obviously, both of these phenomena occurred elsewhere. Yet because of St. Louis’s unique economic make-up, things could have been much worse—much, much worse if St. Louis did not take many of the steps that it did. At one point, St. Louis was the second largest auto manufacturing center in the country. Without a doubt, the decline of the industry has taken its toll on the region. However, unlike Detroit, St. Louis is not in a free-fall. We are still in a position to fight another day. Although it has taken some time and the recent economic downturn has slowed progress, some smart planning decisions have stabilized the region’s slippage. Metrolink, the Great Rivers Greenway, the Housing Tax Credits, and recent downtown revitalization all show that St. Louis could be great again—if only we had the will to plan to be.

BUT SOME MISTAKES WERE MADE

This is not to say that simply having a plan will automatically correct everything which plagues the region. Some plans in the past may not only have been bad. They may have been evil. Whether it was by design or not, many “plans” made in the fifties and sixties in the name of urban renewal led to a greater concentration of African-American poverty in both the city and the suburbs. While the conditions of Mill Creek Valley demanded radical action (two thirds of the homes did not have indoor plumbing as of 1950) and that NOT to respond to these conditions would clearly have been racist, the Mill Creek Urban Renewal Project was an act of cultural genocide. The largest African-American neighborhood in St. Louis, a neighborhood with vital churches, schools, businesses, and institutions was simply annihilated. Between Grand on the west, Olive/Lindell on the north, 20th on the east, and the Mill Creek rail yards on the south, everything was leveled except for 5 buildings—Vashon High School (now the Henry Givens Administration building on the campus of Harris-Stowe State University), the adjacent Vashon Community Center (now part of Harris-Stowe), Waring Elementary School (since torn down to make room for the new Saint Louis University Arena, Berea Presbyterian Church (now owned by Saint Louis University) and a small Catholic Church which has since been demolished except for its bell tower to make way for the expansion of A.G. Edwards campus. The devastation was so complete that the site came to be referred to as “Hiroshima Flats.” The sin—if it may be called that—was not in demolishing the community. It was deliberately keeping the residents out of the planning process. They were not even asked where they wanted to live once they were displaced. Having few or no options, the dislocated residents—many of whom were recent migrants to St. Louis from the rural South—were forced to move to the new Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex or to the Ville—the other African-American neighborhood—to face the same problems which supposedly they had just left. Although not as blatant acts of racism as Mill Creek, many of the zoning plans in the suburbs had the same result. By designating certain areas for only large single family homes on over-sized lots, St. Louis suburbs “planned” to use their zoning ordinances to cordon off their municipalities not only from African Americans, but from poor people as well.

Regional planners have also made economic and physical blunders. The beltways (I-255, I-270, and I-370) have pulled the region out in a scatter-shot fashion. Moreover, by not providing for a freeway that runs from downtown to Alton, planners have essentially cut off the northern
portion of the region economically and socially from the rest of the metropolis. The Central Parkway has eviscerated the downtown. All of the building in the floodplains is a disaster waiting to happen. And of course, the depressed section of I-70, the Lamiere complex, and the placement of the Madison County landfill virtually across the street from Cahokia Mounds, are abominations.

But perhaps the most egregious mistakes of regional planners have not been mistakes of commission, but of omission. Is not so much what they have done, but what they have not done. St. Louis should have one of the most amazing riverfronts in the country, if not the world. While the Gateway Arch and the grounds are truly amazing, the region should be ashamed of itself for not fully taking advantage of this wonder. Not only is the view to the east a disgrace, but also the way that the city is cut off from the Arch and the grounds by the Third Street depression and the Mansion House complex is just unfathomable. St. Louisans like to blame their woes on the fact that the region does not have either mountains or an ocean nearby. But neither does Paris nor London. What they have are rivers which run through their respective regions. It is unimaginable that they would have neglected potential jewels such as Laclede’s and Chouteau’s landings as we have done.

But then again, the riverfront is merely an aesthetic issue. What is truly troubling is that the region has not addressed the racial and class divisions that have eaten away at the soul of the region. Although some St. Louisans would believe that matters involving race and class only pertain to the City of St. Louis, race and class are what keeps the region from effectively taking charge of its fate. As a “community,” St. Louisans are paranoid about the possibility of having people who do not look like them or have comparable bank accounts living next door.

Perhaps the loudest articulation of the region’s racial and class divisions is the state of its schools. Nothing has manifested and continues to manifest the racial and class divisions in the region as the state of its schools. It is a regional “joke” that the first question that St. Louisans ask of one another is where someone went to high school. However, the state of the region’s schools is not a laughing matter. While there are a few good schools—both public and private—sprinkled throughout the region, St. Louis as a whole—not just the city—has mediocre educational systems. It is true that the decline of American manufacturing has been the fundamental factor in the region’s decline. However, it has been the poor quality of the region’s education system that has hampered our ability to deal effectively with this challenge. And if one factor can be attributed to why the region’s schools are as bad as they are, that one factor would have to be the race and class divisions that keep the region from acting as a region. It is almost as if we as a region have “planned” to have poor schools by slicing and dicing the metropolis up into school districts that only serve children of a particular racial and economic background. Whether our fragmentation is by design or not, the only way that we as a region can reclaim our status as one of America’s great metropolitan centers is by “planning” for all of the region’s schools to be a standard for the rest of the country to emulate.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE RIGHT

Early Successes

But what should give us hope as a region is that we have used planning to overcome our challenges and to achieve greatness in the past. As far back as 1763 planning was a major part of the region’s character and the foundation of its success. Laclede and his fourteen year old adopted son, August Chouteau, did not accidentally pick the site for St. Louis. They planned it. They knew even before they left New Orleans that they wanted to be close to the confluence of the Mississippi and the Missouri in order to tap into potential market for furs on both rivers. But
they were also quite conscious of choosing a site that would not be at the confluence itself knowing that it would be prone to flooding. So when they reached the confluence, they deliberately backtracked until they found a site that would be high enough so that the settlement itself would never be vulnerable to the floods that would inevitably come. The site on which the present day Gateway Arch stands was exactly what Laclede had planned.

The site for the fur trading fort was not the only thing which Laclede and his son planned. They also knew that they wanted to lay out the streets of the city using a grid pattern just like the street pattern of New Orleans. They also knew that they wanted their new town to possess a square to facilitate social interaction and civic engagement, again just like New Orleans. But they were not just copying the New Orleans model. After choosing the site in November of 1763, Laclede and Chouteau wintered in nearby Fort Chartres, approximately 60 miles downriver. When there was a break in the weather in February, Laclede sent Chouteau and a group of men back to the site to lay out the streets so that settlement could commence in early spring. What is striking about the plan is that the town was deliberately conceived to be longer than it was deep and that the blocks would not be square but oblong rectangles. What made this so clever—presumably on Laclede’s part—was that such a design would not give only give the new town more contact with the river, it would also give it more exposure to the prevailing westerly winds making the homes cooler in the summer. Although the 1907 plan bemoans the fact that the Laclede plan did not take advantage of the natural arch-like curvature of the river north and south of the original settlement to create radial avenues to the northwest and southwest, the grid plan has served the city well over time. Not only did it make development and conveyance of ownership easy, it has made navigating the city and the region a fairly straight-forward task.
Another smart planning decision that the city made early on was improving the riverfront to facilitate the movement of goods. Technically, St. Louis did not become a city until 1822 when it was recognized as such by the new state of Missouri. William Carr Lane was the first mayor, and one of his first actions was to push for the laying of cobblestones the length of the city’s contact with the Mississippi to make it easier to load and unload boats that moored at St. Louis. The first steamboat to reach St. Louis came in 1817 just eight years after the *Claremont* sailed from New York City to Albany up the Hudson River. Carr Lane realized—as did many St. Louisans—that the steamboat had the potential of making St. Louis the center of a vast trading network in the center of the country. But this potential could only be realized if the city provided the infrastructure that would allow St. Louis to tap into it. Without the cobblestones, the waterfront would have been a muddy quagmire churned up by horses trying to pull wagons from the water’s edge into town. If Carr Lane and the other city fathers had not moved as quickly as they did, some other city or town could have become the focus of this trade which involved thousands of boats a year. This was a lesson seemingly forgotten in the 1970s when St. Louis lost a chance to have a new airport. Unable to arrive at a consensus where the new airport should have been located and believing that the city’s geographical location would always make St. Louis an air center, the region saw its federal monies go to Houston to build its world-class airport while the national ranking of its main airport slipping.
to 32nd busiest in the country, no longer even a hub. It is a lesson which St. Louis has had to learn repeatedly—geography is not necessarily destiny.

Planning as a Response to Crisis

There were other planning successes in St. Louis that made it the eighth largest city in the country by the Civil War. As is often the case, two of these planning decisions were responses to separate catastrophes that both occurred in 1849. The first involved the explosion of a steamboat on the waterfront where the fire spread up the bluff into the city destroying virtually everything between the river and Third Street. Like the Chicago fire a quarter of a century later, the St. Louis fire proved to be both an opportunity, as well as a challenge. While it destroyed a great deal of property, it gave the city the chance to rebuild its commercial district with new, more sustainable, materials. Most of the early structures were frame. But new building codes after the fire would mandate that the new structures had to be made of masonry, which stimulated the brick industry.

The second catastrophe that occurred in 1849 was the cholera epidemic. Although cholera was introduced into the city from the outside—probably a passenger on one of the steamboats—it was allowed to kill a tenth of the city’s population because of poor sanitation practices in the city. Because of pollution and burial practices, the city had incredibly poor drinking water. To propel a mill to make cornmeal, the early French settlers had dammed the Mill Creek which flowed into the Mississippi just south of the original settlement (close to where Chouteau Avenue is now). The dammed up creek created a lake that extended out to present day 14th Street. As the city grew, sewage naturally drained into what was called “Chouteau’s Pond” which had been the city’s main source of drinking water. With contaminated drinking water, the city’s residents were unable to combat the cholera bacteria that attacked their digestive systems, and succumbed to dehydration.

Realizing what had caused the massive wave of death, the city not only drained Chouteau’s Pond, but also mandated that burials could no longer take place on church grounds since this practice led to leaching of decaying bodies into the underground aquifer. As a result, churches and other institutions started building cemeteries on the periphery of the city. However, the main response was building a massive sewer system underneath the city. By 1868, 101 miles of sewers had been built that served all parts of the city at a cost of $3 million—an amazing sum in the middle of the nineteenth century. What both of these planning acts show is that St. Louisans in the past had the fortitude and self-confidence to meet seemingly impossible challenges head on to make the city a better place. It was not just fate that allowed the city to recover, but the ability to think through the problem and to devise a coherent strategy.

The Story of the Railroad

The city’s response to the railroad is another case in point of St. Louis’s ability to plan effectively early in its history. A common lament that St. Louisans often express is that St. Louis is always slower than Chicago in responding to change. The example that is usually given is how slow St. Louis adapted to the coming of the railroad. As the story goes, St. Louis was wedded to the steamboat and let Chicago get a head start in developing its rail network. As a result, St. Louis languished and Chicago moved ahead of St. Louis as the premier Midwestern city. However, this was hardly the case. True, Chicago embraced the railroad early on. But so did St. Louis. While the first rail lines which began emanating from Chicago were built in the mid-1840s, St. Louis businessmen had been talking about the potential of the railroad since the mid-1930s and
constructed the first railroad out of the city, the Iron Mountain, in the early 1850s that extended south of the city. Even after the 1854 Gasconade River disaster, where hundreds of prominent St. Louisans met their deaths when a rail trestle collapsed, the city did not abandon the new iron horse. Throughout the 1850s, St. Louis was often mentioned as a potential eastern terminus for the planned transcontinental railroad (Chicago, Memphis, and New Orleans were also mentioned). Chicago, however, did break away after the Civil War when it was able to cross the Mississippi before St. Louis. Because Omaha was eventually chosen as the eastern terminus of the transcontinental railroad and because Chicago already had a line extended to Omaha, Chicago boomed after 1869 when the transcontinental railroad was completed, becoming America’s largest rail center.  

What is left out of the story is that St. Louis performed several planning and engineering marvels at virtually the same time to keep pace with its Midwestern rival, that would eventually propel it to become America’s second most important rail hub. St. Louis business and civic leaders were not blind to the ramifications of the race to cross the Mississippi first. But being further north, Chicago had a huge advantage. The river north of the Missouri is not nearly as wide, nor deep, or as fast flowing as the Mississippi as it is in front of St. Louis. While crossing the river at the Quad Cities was a major engineering challenge of its own, it paled in comparison to what James Eads encountered. He not only had to cross a river a half a mile wide. He had to cross it with a bridge tall enough to allow steamboats to travel underneath it. His task would have been impossible at the time that Chicago built its bridge because the only thing which allowed the project to be feasible was the advent of steel in 1862. Prohibited by law from constructing a suspension bridge, the design that Eads eventually adopted was one that involved ribbed arches. With spans of over 500 feet, the design depended on the use of steel to provide the necessary strength. But this led to another major obstacle—the depth of the river and the depth of the bedrock under the river. Eads was forced to build caissons in order to sink the arches. These pneumatic caissons were some of the deepest ever built and led to the deaths of 15 workers who were afflicted by “the bends” that resulted from the depth that they had to work. When the bridge opened in 1874 it was quickly recognized as one of the marvels of the world.
However, what really made the St. Louis rail system really work were the approaches into and out of the city. The most impressive of these approaches was the freight tunnel built under the existing downtown to the old bed of Mill Creek that allowed trains a clear shot out of the city. Though now used by Metrolink, the freight tunnel eventually tied the system to the Cupples Station warehousing complex, which was perhaps the foremost warehousing facility in the country when it opened in 1891. The tunnel brought the trains directly underneath the 1.5 million square feet of warehouse space in the complex where freight was transferred to the floors above via state-of-the-art hydraulic pressure elevators. While St. Louis maintained its position as the second most important rail center through the first half of the twentieth century, it has been supplanted by Kansas City, Houston, Dallas, and Detroit to name a just a few of the regions that have been more diligent in planning how to respond to changes in the industry and the market place. Again, geography is not destiny—just opportunity.

The 1907 Civic League Plan

Yet St. Louis has seized opportunity in the past. Perhaps the “smartest” moment in St. Louis occurred just after the World’s Fair when it beat Chicago in producing the country’s first comprehensive or master plans. What made the 1907 plan so smart was not that the Civic League realized that they were in a contest with their counterparts in Chicago, the Commercial Club, to write the plan. Nor was it the fact that the plan was better than Chicago. Indeed in terms of imagination, most planning historians would argue that the Chicago 1909 plan was bolder. What
made the plan so smart—and why this book is molded after the 1907 Civic League plan—was the crucial insight that the city—any city—is an organic whole; physically, socially, economically, and politically. It reflected the belief and the conviction that all of the citizens were tied together in the common act of building the city and that this common act made them a community. It was—and is—a revolutionary idea.

Although many contemporary suburban plans are actually bigger documents with fancier visuals, the 1907 plan is truly an amazing document. With many of the most famous planners of the time, such as Henry Wright and George Kessler working on the project, the plan attempted to coordinate ideas for constructing a civic center, designing a regional park system, improving the riverfront, reworking the street plan, devising urban design guidelines, and coming up with effective implementation tactics.

However, the report which took the planning field in an entirely new direction—even more than the Chicago plan—and what prompted F.L. Olmsted, Jr. to call comprehensive planning “a new sort of thing”—was Henry Wright’s concept of a community center. Though the report offering two proposals for constructing a citywide civic center around the new City Hall at Twelfth and Market drew more city and national attention, Wright’s notions of how community centers strategically placed around the city could build stronger neighborhoods was what really set the plan apart and made it comprehensive. Even more than Daniel Burnham, the architect of the Chicago Plan, Wright saw that the plan needed to treat public and public land as a whole and that the plan had to address the social, as well as, the physical fabric of the city. Unquestionably, many of Wright’s ethnic and racial stereotypes would be considered offensive today. However, he correctly saw that planning could be used as a tool to bring people together whatever their ethnic or racial background. While some social theorists have argued that ideas like Wright’s are positivistic and that physical design alone cannot bind people together, they miss the key insight of many of the early comprehensive planners. For a planner like Wright, configuring public space so that people from a variety of backgrounds came together on common ground did not force them to become a community like a bunch of robots. What it did, though, was to encourage them to collectively join together in making their neighborhood. It is an idea which has apparently been lost as St. Louisans move from one suburb to another trying to “buy” a community to which they can belong.
A Strategy for Saving the City

Even though Detroit and Cleveland had surpassed St. Louis in population by the 1920 census, St. Louis made a lot of smart planning decisions in the teens and twenties. For one, it built upon the momentum of the 1907 plan and created an official planning commission—one of the first cities in the nation to do so. The new commission formed a city planning department—again one of the first in the country—and authorized another comprehensive plan in 1917. This new plan was the basis of the 1918 street plan which brilliantly proposed pulling Gravois and Natural Bridge roads into the center of the city that in conjunction with the widening of Olive created a system of radials that stream-lined traffic in and out of the city. The 1917 plan also was the foundation for the 1919 zoning plan. Although New York had prepared a zoning plan in 1916, it could be argued that the St. Louis ordinance was more influential, since it was more concerned with regulating land use as opposed to mandating height and mass regulations (which was the emphasis of the New York zoning plan). St. Louis also passed an aggressive bond issue in 1923 that resulted in the construction of the Civil Courts Building (Market and Twelfth) and the Kiel Center (Market and Fourteenth), as well as, an assortment of major infrastructure projects. In addition, the 1928 Riverfront Plan proposed a bold and innovative strategy for tying the arterials proposed in the 1918 street plan by submerging Third Street.

All of these initiatives were the product of one man—Harland Bartholomew. While Bartholomew has come to be vilified in St. Louis, as well as by much of the planning profession over the last generation, he was clearly one of the most important figures in American City and Regional Planning in the twentieth century. Not only was Bartholomew director of St. Louis’s Planning Department for almost 50 years, he was a Professor of Urban Planning at the University of Illinois who wrote and delivered hundreds of presentations, and the founding partner of Harland Bartholomew and Associates, the world’s largest urban planning firm that produced over six hundred comprehensive plans world-wide. Nowhere was Bartholomew’s impact as keen as it was in St. Louis. From St. Louis’s interstates, to its zoning patterns, to many of its public buildings, to many of its urban renewal schemes, St. Louis even today reflects Bartholomew’s influence.
Many urban commentators, however, place St. Louis’s alleged demise at the feet of Bartholomew. For them, St. Louis’s long decline started with Bartholomew’s 1947 comprehensive plan for the city. They see him as the grand architect of the large scale clearance projects, the massive public housing complexes, and the intrusive interstate system of the fifties, sixties, and seventies that in their minds cut out the soul of the city, which led to its decay. Even though most of these events took place after Bartholomew had left the city and deviated significantly from his designs, it is clear that many of the mistakes made in the post war period stemmed from his original concepts. However, it is also clear that many of these commentators—past and present—missed Bartholomew’s central concept concerning urban renewal and neighborhood preservation. While they understood him correctly in calling for full scale clearance of some areas, they failed to hear him say that the most important element of urban renewal was not clearance of areas beyond repair, but the remaking of those areas that could be.

Though he made this observation in the 1947 plan, Bartholomew fleshed out his theory much more fully in a little noted document which he prepared in 1936 which outlined his ideas for urban renewal in St. Louis, entitled Urban Land Policy. In this document, he argued that some of the city’s building stock was so old that it had been constructed before many contemporary “assumed” amenities like kitchens, bathrooms, and modern heating were even available. Because many of these houses were too small or dilapidated to be economically feasible to be retrofitted, they simply had to come down. The city was spending more money to provide fire protection and other services to maintain them in an unsatisfactory state than the revenues which they were generating. While his analysis of these areas often reads as being very hard-hearted (and he does indeed follow the Home Owners Loan Corporation’s lead in using “racially-mixed” as a criterion for rating a neighborhood), no one would argue that St. Louis would be a better place today if we still had neighborhoods with privies. Something had to be done with these areas. The question was how.
But again for Bartholomew, the real problem was not the obsolete areas of the city, but its blighted ones. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Bartholomew made a distinction between structures that were beyond repair and those that were simply in poor repair. If the city had to make a choice, it was better off spending resources to rehabilitate blighted areas to keep them from becoming obsolete. Bartholomew outlined a three prong strategy for accomplishing this. One, pockets of properties that could not be saved would be removed, not with a sledge hammer, but with a scalpel. Dilapidated properties would be replaced with in-fill housing or pocket playgrounds (Bartholomew was big on playgrounds). Two, it was crucial that the city adopt stringent building codes to insure that properties are properly maintained and updated when necessary. Three—and most importantly—Bartholomew forcibly argued the city should aggressively foster the creation of strong and vital neighborhood organizations.

So in the end, I would argue that Bartholomew not only made a number of “smart” decisions, he might have saved St. Louis. He was probably blinded by racial prejudice in how he suggested the obsolete areas be treated and which eventually became policy (however, he would never have argued for the high rise complexes like Pruitt-Igoe nor would he have approved of the placement of the interstates as they came to be). But his overall urban renewal strategy may have been the city’s salvation. Though the residents should have been involved in their recreation, neighborhoods like Mill Creek, Carr Square, and some parts of Soulard would have been totally intolerable if they had not been replaced when they were. More crucial though has been the fact that St. Louis has generally done the right things in terms of neighborhood preservation over the last twenty–five or thirty years. While it has helped that St. Louis houses are brick and not frame, that South City neighborhoods have often received more assistance than those on the North Side and that some infill projects have been less than pleasing, St. Louis neighborhoods and their associations are still a major asset for the city and the region.

A Strategy for Saving the Region

While it may be an exaggeration that Harland Bartholomew “saved” the City of St. Louis with his 1947 comprehensive plan during the last century, it can hardly be overstated that his 1948 regional plan offers the best—if not the only—strategy for reclaiming the region’s lost prestige in this century. Although St. Louis is hardly noted as a hotbed of regionalism, Bartholomew prepared a little known outline for a
regional plan in 1948 for the newly formed Metropolitan Plan Association that prescribed how the region could formulate and implement a coherent and unified approach for dealing with change. Even though it is rather limited in scope (it is only 50 pages long), Bartholomew’s Guide Plan is not only “smart,” it is absolutely essential reading for St. Louisans who care about the future of the region and its ability to thrive.

But St. Louis had gone down this regionalism path before 1948. In 1926 there was a referendum to merge the city and county that was soundly defeated in the county. Likewise, county residents thwarted an effort by Robert Roessel, the city attorney for Webster Groves, to create a federated St. Louis modeled after the London County Council that would have permitted suburban municipalities their identities and most of their powers in 1930. St. Louis had even set up a regional planning commission in the mid 1930s, emulating New York, San Francisco, and other metropolitan regions who had experimented with regional plans in the 1920s and 1930s.

Undeterred by these earlier defeats, a group of business heavyweights, realizing that the long term economic health depended upon regional cooperation, created the Regional Plan Association in 1947 and immediately hired Harland Bartholomew and Associates to prepare a blueprint of what a comprehensive plan might look like. The Guide Plan was not so much a plan, but a bundle of reports that were meant to be primarily suggestive. Though many of Bartholomew’s planning tactics and observations are interesting, readers of the 1947 plan would not find much that would be surprising. In fact, Bartholomew inserted some graphics that he had used a year earlier. Not surprisingly, he called for a comprehensive land use plan for the entire region and the need to have zoning ordinances throughout the region. He also called for the coordination of regional transit operations and facilities, as well as, the planned four transcontinental Interstate routes that were anticipated to converge on the region. In addition, Bartholomew noted the region’s strategic location and the need to maintain its rail, air, and river infrastructure. Moreover, he cited the region’s problems with water supply, sewerage, flood control, and conservation and the need to come up with a coordinated regional approach to all these issues. He also argued that housing and redevelopment was not just a St. Louis issue, but a regional one, as well, and that the region needed a “definite and well integrated area-wide housing program.”

But the brilliance of the Guide Plan was not with the planning concepts, but with Bartholomew’s implementation tactics. For Bartholomew, what was important was not just having a plan, but the power to implement it. According to him, this demanded nothing less than a “new agency of government” that would “give better coordination of and direction to growth, and to foster if not to provide certain types of improvements which are peculiarly metropolitan in character.” Being a life-long Republican, Bartholomew was hardly a proponent of big government and believed that the functions of this new agency “must be limited to the most dominant needs” and that should “exercise full administrative authority only where such authority is lacking or is not otherwise adequately provided.”

Nevertheless, he believed that it was crucial to have a metropolitan agency that would have three key powers. The first was preparing the area-wide plan itself. This plan would determine present and future needs in terms of land use, population distribution, transportation facilities, highways, rapid transit, flood control, sewers, drainage, park and recreation facilities, and housing. The second power he called for was “improving and extending facilities and services of metropolitan significance.” This would involve such things as sewerage and mass transit. The third and last function that Bartholomew called for was the acquisition, construction, and administration of improvements of special metropolitan character—like airports. In short, what Bartholomew
wanted was an agency that would mandate the efficient and effective allocation of resources for the
to the entire region. Other regions like Portland, Minneapolis, Denver—the currently
successful ones—have discovered over the last sixty years that Bartholomew’s idea was “smart.”

Maybe, St. Louis should too.

**What We Could Have Done Smarter and Where to Now**

Actually, St. Louis and the region have planned and implemented a number of smart
tactics since Bartholomew and the *Guide Plan*. In hindsight, most of the urban renewal projects of
the fifties and sixties were the right moves, if poorly executed. Undoubtedly, the African-
American community should have been brought into the process and the construction of public
housing complexes were obvious examples of deliberate segregation; the slums that ringed the
town had to go. And while the city still has substantial pockets of deteriorated housing,
programs like Operation Conserv in the 1980s did a great deal to stabilize the city’s neighborhoods.
The HOPE VI projects of recent years have radically remade much of the horrible public
housing complexes. Moreover, while some of the connecting pieces are a little rough, most of the
downtown renewal projects have worked. The arch remains an architectural wonder. The former
Busch stadium was the best of its generation. Even the Scottrade Center (formerly known as the
Savvis) Center and Edward Jones Dome are two of the better modern indoor sports facilities.
More attention should have been paid to its north and west faces, but for the most part, the
convention center connects well with the downtown even if it is a drab venue. St. Louis Centre has
proved to be a bad decision, but the remaking of Washington Avenue and the emerging residential
community downtown should have staying power despite the current recession.

Even in terms of regional projects, St. Louis has made some right moves, even though
St. Louis is seldom seen as having a strong identity for doing regional planning. St. Louis has one
of the best freeway systems in the country (Some people would say it is too good. If it was not
so easy to get around we would not have the sprawl that we have). Metro St. Louis was making
huge strides with Metrolink and even the bus system before Proposition M was turned down. The
Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) has done an excellent job since its inception in 1954. The
cultural district and the Great Rivers Greenway are viewed as “best practices” around the country.

So what happened if we did so many smart things? Within a generation, the city has lost
nearly two thirds of its population and the region is threatened with the prospect of dropping
into the third tier of metropolitan regions. But the case of the city is not that big of deal. It is
more a statistical abnormality than a real problem. Probably most St. Louisans (maybe even most
Americans) would be uncomfortable with the density of the city if we still had almost a million
inhabitants. Moreover, St. Louis would probably have at least twice as many people as it now has if
the city would have been allowed to annex suburban areas as long as other major American cities.
The reason that we did not was because of the city-county divorce of 1876 (which was not only
“not smart,” it was stupid—and for the record, it was a city initiative—not the county’s). Most
cities annexed peripheral areas as late as the turn-of-the-century. If that had been the case in
St. Louis, the current city boundaries would stretch out to I-170 instead of Skinker.

The real problem is regional decline because the real city, the real St. Louis the whole
metropolitan region, on both sides of the river. Although some people would argue that they like
the size of the region, being smaller is not merely a matter of prestige, it has real consequences.
Regional population size is directly related to the economic health of the region. A region which
has solid business base attracts people, because people go where the jobs are. Undoubtedly, there
are problems associated with growth—congestion, higher prices, sprawl if you let it. But there are also problems with stagnation or population loss. Fewer workers mean fewer tax dollars to support services and improvements. Fewer workers mean an aging population with fewer people to support them. Fewer workers can even mean fewer cultural amenities—maybe even the loss of the Cardinals.

What creates the economic base of a city or a region, no matter when or where you are talking about, boils down to just two things—just as Bartholomew argued sixty years ago—infrastructure and cultural amenities. Businesses locate where they are able to deliver their products/services to their intended markets and where the employers/employees want to live. The bottom line is that compared to many other regions—probably 19 or 20 according to the next census—St. Louis is not as nice a place to do business or to live.

In my mind, a clue to why this is so lies in comparing and contrasting what we do well as a region with what we do poorly. On the plus side, I think most commentators would list our highway system, the quality and affordability of our housing stock, cultural and recreational institutions, our tertiary education systems, our transportation system—at least up to just a few months ago, and for those that can afford it, our health care system. But on the negative side, most people would put our elementary and secondary educational systems, non-competitive air and rail facilities, the lack of a coherent economic development program, the existence of a hodge-podge of governmental regulations and funding streams—and our inability to deal with our racial and class divisions. The glaring variable which links those things which we do well and those which we do poorly is structured regional coordination. The things which we do well happen when we act regionally. The things which we do poorly we do in a fragmented, disjointed fashion.

So what is the answer? The answer is the same as it was for Laclede in 1764, for Carr Lane in 1822, for Bartholomew in 1948, and the St. Louis Civic League in 1907. St. Louis needs a plan, but this time, it needs to be regional in scope. But just like for the Civic League in 1907, we need to create the mechanisms to insure that it will be implemented. Now that would be smart.
Endnotes


2. As of the last census, the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was the eighteenth largest in the United States, many demographers anticipate that both Denver (19th) and Tampa Bay will move ahead of St. Louis in the 2010 census. For current rankings, see the United States Census Bureau, Census 2000 PHC-T-3. *Metropolitan Areas Ranked by Population: 2000*.

3. Perhaps the most damning account of these two failed planning efforts is the recent account by Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).


6. Colin Gordon argues that private planning firms such as Harland Bartholomew and Associates deliberately used planning ordinances as a means to segregate St. Louis suburbs. See Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, 118.

7. Interestingly, Harland Bartholomew called for the Mark Twain Expressway (what would become I-70) to run north to Alton before veering southwest to Lambert Airport. See Metropolitan Plan Association, Inc. (St. Louis), *Guide Plan Missouri-Illinois Metropolitan Area: An over-all analysis of the major metropolitan development problems with some tentative proposals for their solution* (St. Louis: Harland Bartholomew and Associates—City Planners, 1948), p.25.

8. According to the most recent edition of Where We Stand where East-West Gateway ranks the St. Louis region among the 35 largest metropolitan regions in the country, St. Louis ranked 17th in terms of the number of adults with high school diplomas, 22nd in terms of adults with less than a 9th grade education, and 16th in terms of educational spending per pupil. East-West Gateway Council of Governments, *Where We Stand: The Strategic Assessment of the St. Louis Region*, 5th ed. (St. Louis: East-West Gateway Council of Governments, 2006), 33-36.

9. There are 24 school districts in St. Louis City and St. Louis County alone. For a map of the school districts in St. Louis County/City see, St. Louis County/ City School District Profiles. Available at http://www.hughchou.org/hugh/stl_schools.html.

10. For a very cogent and thoughtful contrary perspective on metropolitan fragmentation in St. Louis, see E. Terrence Jones, *Fragmented by Design: Why St. Louis Has So Many Governments* (St. Louis: Palmerston and Reed Publishing Company, 2000).


17. For an excellent account of the bridge’s construction, see Howard S. Miller, *The Eads Bridge*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1999).


21. The City Plan Commission, St. Louis, Mo. (Harland Bartholomew, Engineer), *Problems of St. Louis: Being a description, from the city planning standpoint, of past and present tendencies of growth with general suggestions for impending issues and necessary future improvements* (St. Louis: Nixon-Jones Printing Co, 1917).

22. For a comprehensive list of planning achievements in St. Louis between 1916 and 1947, see City Plan Commission, St. Louis, MO (Harland Bartholomew: Engineer), *Comprehensive City Plan: St. Louis, Missouri, 1947* (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1947), 70-75.


26. For an excellent account of the efforts to consolidate St. Louis City and St. Louis County, see Jon C. Teaford, *City and Suburb: the political fragmentation of metropolitan America, 1850-1970* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1979).

27. See, for example, St. Louis Regional Planning Commission, *Planning Progress in the St. Louis Region* (St. Louis, MO., 1937).


34. According to the most recent edition of *Where We Stand* by East-West Gateway, St. Louis ranks 5th of the 35 largest metropolitan regions in terms of freeway land miles per square mile. East-West Gateway Council of Governments, *Where We Stand*, 68-69.

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About the Author

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Chapter 3
“The Public Buildings Group:”
The Search for a Public Consciousness

The first real planning element in the 1907 plan was a report that had been prepared three years earlier that proposed two different scenarios for grouping recently approved public buildings around the new city hall which had only been completed in 1898. While the expressed objectives of the report were to convince St. Louisans that such a grouping would be more architecturally pleasing and more efficient than simply having them standing randomly around the city, the concept of a public buildings group was much more than that to both them and us. As for the classical Greeks, the placement of these new public buildings would create not only efficiencies, but also a common sense of identity. Like the agora, the public buildings group would be a place of assembly where St. Louisans would gather to collectively do the city’s business. In short, it would signify that St. Louis was not just a place, but a community.

By the time it was included in the plan, the Public Buildings Group report had already accomplished a great deal. It was the stimulus behind a recent bond issue that had been approved to finance a new court house, jail, police headquarters, and health department. It also was the force that prompted the Library Board to plan a new main library. Although St. Louisans are constantly lamenting planning follow-through, it is amazing how much of the William Eames—the nationally known local architect—plan was implemented. Actually, the plan was not one plan but two. Plan 1 proposed using Twelfth Street (now Tucker) as an axis to group the new buildings with City Hall as an anchor. Plan 2—the more ambitious of the two—proposed that Thirteenth Street be removed thereby creating an open space mall, like the one in Washington D.C. It was clear which option the committee favored. As John Lawrence Moran, the chairman of the Public Buildings Group committee noted, “St. Louis has the opportunity, at a little more than the cost of the buildings, which are an immediate necessity, of securing a breathing space, a beauty spot and a scheme for present grouping and future development of which we may all be proud.” Although the placement of some of the buildings is slightly different than Eames had suggested, the basic concept of the plan was carried out intact. The Thirteenth Street mall was created with public buildings grouped around it—with the Main Library at one end and the Police Headquarters at the other.

The importance of the report is not that it was actually carried out or that the public buildings group is architecturally significant (which we believe it is). What is important is the process that was pursued. The original intent of the report—even before the League included it as part of the plan—was to stimulate public discussion. By presenting two options—even though they clearly favored one over the other—Mauran and Eames wanted to create a debate where the merits of the two plans are deliberated. Moreover, they realized that they were starting a public conversation that would go on for years, if not decades, and that would focus the decision-making process as St. Louisans jointly decided how to allocate scarce resources. Perhaps it is a model which St. Louis would do well to still follow.

We pick up this focus on “starting a public conversation” as the way to modernize this chapter for today’s region. Terry Jones, one of the leading experts on the region, offers a very thorough overview of how “city” decisions necessarily became “regional” decisions—and the institutional arrangements that addressed the newfound needs emerging in the metropolitan area. Some ideas were grand, others less so. Some were formal, others not so formal. Some reigned
down from above, others sprang forth from grassroots. Most importantly, some were successful and others were not. The City of St. Louis and St. Louis County have found many ways to work together, while still maintaining their independence. Readers may well be surprised at the extent to which regional action takes place, the groundwork that it creates, and the potential in a region that keeps stretching across more and more geography.

Journalist James Ingram presents a very frank assessment of the region and the decisions it should be making. The ability (or inability, as the case may be) to have a meaningful dialogue across the political lines or across racial lines affects outcomes. The metropolitan area faces significant problems of mass transit, education, and crime. Viewing these problems as matters of geography will not solve them. Coming together as a region and a people just might. Ingram points out that the power of dialogue to solve problems is greater than the power of fear to create them. Given a proper chance, the region’s diversity can emerge as a strength rather than a division.

Todd Swanstrom and Jeremy Main offer an outstanding direction for regional dialogue—the idea of “regional resilience.” Regional resilience is the ability of a metropolitan area to respond to changing situations in a meaningful and timely fashion. Swanstrom and Main give an extensive review of challenges facing the metropolitan area, many of which are familiar to those who have studied the region. Economic changes, race relations, and suburban sprawl are tenacious issues in St. Louis (and other cities, too). These alone do not prevent a region from being resilient, but they do make it more difficult to achieve. The barriers to resilience are several, but they are not impossible to overcome: weakened central city government, fragmented government structures, and a desire for close-knit or private control of decision-making. In fact, there are several examples where these barriers have been overcome (despite challenges) and offer direction for resiliency. Some cities are in much worse shape than St. Louis (Detroit as an example). It is not too late for the region to consider its options. The authors ask—is the glass half full or half empty? The resilient answer is obvious.
MAKING REGIONAL DECISIONS
E. Terrence Jones

THE CHANGING METROPOLIS

Over the past fifty years, the typical American metropolis’s land use patterns have moved from a single central city surrounded by suburbs to a cluster of separate nodes scattered across a broader area. Urbanists characterize this as “from Chicago to Los Angeles.”¹ No longer is Chicago with its Downtown Loop the modal region; instead, it is Los Angeles, once ridiculed as hundreds of suburbs in search of a downtown. Nor, indeed, has even Chicago remained monocentric, now referring to itself as Chicagoland, stretching from Kenosha on the north to Joliet on the west down to Gary on the southeast.

St. Louis has followed this pattern albeit on a smaller scale. In 1950, the City of St. Louis contained over half the region’s population and even a greater share of its jobs. Both residential living and economic activity were concentrated within its boundaries. Now only one-eighth of the area’s population and one-fifth of the jobs are located there. Several other job-residential concentrations have emerged over the past fifty years including St. Charles County’s Golden Triangle, Clayton and Chesterfield in St. Louis County, and in Illinois, River Bend and the Scott Air Force Base/Belleville/O’Fallon/Mascoutah complex.

With the change in the urban scene has come transformation in regional decision-making. From the City of St. Louis’s separation from St. Louis County in 1876 to the mid-1950’s, the City dominated both its own governance as well as that for the entire area. Its elected officials and economic elites set and executed the regional agenda. The players changed over time but their City location remained a constant. Even the unsuccessful efforts to reconcile with St. Louis County in 1926 and 1930 were done on the City’s terms, dictates rather than negotiations.²

As late as the early 1950s, other jurisdictions—including St. Louis County with its over four hundred thousand residents—were still regional sideshows. When Mayor Joseph M. Darst asked the heads of the City’s largest corporations in 1953 to organize what became known as Civic Progress, its agenda concentrated on downtown development and urban renewal.³ What was critical for the City automatically became the region’s top priorities with City politicians and City civic elites directing the process.
REGIONALISM BECOMES CITY PLUS COUNTY

As St. Louis County’s population mushroomed from 406,349 in 1950 to 703,532 in 1960 while the City’s slipped from 856,796 in 1950 to 750,026 in 1960, it became increasingly difficult to maintain the conflation of City of St. Louis and regional priorities as one and the same. By 1970, when the County had added another quarter million residents while the City was losing about half that number, it was impossible. Further complicating matters was the County’s rising prominence in the economic arena, as jobs followed residents to the suburbs. Corporations like Monsanto were building campus headquarters in Creve Coeur, Clayton was becoming the hot spot for Class A offices, and McDonnell Douglas was booming as the Cold War became hotter.

Together, the City and County had almost seventy percent of the region’s residents and about three-quarters of its jobs. The regional discourse shifted from what’s best for the City to how can the City and County work better together to accomplish area goals. The St. Louis County supervisor (now County executive) became a key player, especially after Lawrence K. Roos began his 12-year reign in 1963. The Civic Progress CEO’s were mostly County residents and a growing number of their businesses were either headquartered in the County or had a major presence there.

Developing a City-County approach for regional decision making proceeded along two tracks: one revolutionary and unsuccessful, the other evolutionary and productive. Spurred and informed by a report prepared by some of the nation’s leading urban scholars and funded by both national (Ford) and local (McDonnell) foundations, the first sweeping proposal was to form a “metropolitan district” overlapping both the City and County with responsibility for arterial roads, public transit regulation, land use planning, economic development, wastewater sewers, and emergency preparedness (then labeled civil defense). It crashed and burned at the ballot box in November 1959, rejected by two-thirds of the City voters and three-quarters of the County electorate.

Undeterred by this setback, a second and even more radical initiative that would have amended the Missouri Constitution to eliminate all local governments in both the City and County and replace them with a single entity was defeated soundly both statewide and in the City and County in the November 1962 election.

What could not be accomplished wholesale, however, was beginning to be handled retail. The most common response to address an issue that affected both the City and the County was to form a single purpose special district. Such entities now cover the many policy areas: sanitary and storm water sewers (Metropolitan Sewer District, established in 1954), community college education (St. Louis Junior College District, founded in 1962), cultural institutions (Zoo-Museum District, formed in 1971 with the Art Museum, Science Center, and Zoo and expanded in 1983 to include the Missouri Botanical Garden and then again in 1987 with the Missouri Historical Society), the arts (Regional Arts Commission, voted into being in 1984), tourism (Convention and Visitors Commission, begun 1984), and the Metropolitan Taxi Commission (established in 2002).

With the exception of the Metropolitan Sewer District, which now includes the City of St. Louis and most, but not all, of St. Louis County, the remaining organizations all have the combined City-County jurisdictions as their formal boundary. For the most part, the governing bodies are appointed by the City and County elected executives. The exception is the community college district whose trustees are directly elected by the voters. The public revenue base is the property tax for the Metropolitan Sewer District, Junior College District, and the Zoo-Museum District, a hotel-motel sales tax for the Regional Arts Commission and the Convention and Visitors Commission, and fees for the Metropolitan Taxi Commission.

Beyond the relatively straightforward special district approach, the City and County have
developed other ways to act jointly on regional matters. When private firms abandoned the mass transit business in St. Louis in the early 1960's, a previously obscure planning agency—Bi-State Development (now Metro)—issued bonds to purchase their assets, hoping that fare box revenues and a tax-exempt status would cover the tab. That did not work, so in 1973 the Missouri General Assembly authorized the City and County to each impose a one-half cent transportation sales tax, all or some of which could be transferred to Metro. Born as an interstate compact in the late 1940s, Metro also serves St. Clair County in Illinois and its governing board has five members from each state, all appointed by the respective governors. To maintain some parity between the City and the County and to provide more local control, the Missouri appointment process was amended in 1980 so that the fifth or odd appointment rotates between the City and County and that the appointments (two City, two County, one rotating) are made by the Missouri governor from a panel of three nominees submitted by either the City of St. Louis Mayor or the St. Louis County Executive, depending on whose turn it is.

In law enforcement, recognizing the need for a common information base, the City and County in 1975 formed the Regional Justice Information System (REJIS). Governance parity prevails with three commissioners appointed by the City Mayor, three by the County Executive, and one jointly. Although still controlled by the City and County, REJIS now provides its services to three additional Missouri counties (Franklin, Jefferson, St. Charles) and three Illinois counties (Madison, Monroe, St. Clair). REJIS’s operations are supported by charging each participating law enforcement agency.

Finally, the City and County entered into several interlocal government agreements. The St. Louis County Economic Council, for example, manages the public business incubators in both jurisdictions. Also done jointly is list maintenance of those eligible for housing subsidies as well as their placement into programs such as Section.

REGIONALISM BECOMES CITY PLUS COUNTY PLUS

The State of Missouri

By the 1980s, it was obvious that the combined City-County population was shrinking, both absolutely and relatively. After peaking at 1,571,319, it had declined to 1,426,984 by 1980, on its way to 1,364,504 in 2000. Once having over two-thirds of the region’s residents, the two jurisdictions now have slightly less
than half. Although still occupying the center of the metropolitan stage, the City and County began looking for additional partners on regional initiatives.

For sports, that partner was the State of Missouri. Over the past few decades, professional leagues have used their cartel status and the quality-of-life competition among metropolitan areas to leverage public tax support for sports venues. St. Louis was no exception. Having lost its National Football League team to Phoenix in 1987, it needed a new stadium to attract another franchise that would help it maintain its major league image. The mortgage for the $300 million project was $24 million annually for thirty years. The City and County agreed to supply $6 million apiece and, for the first time on a regional project, the State of Missouri became a partner, supplying the remaining $12 million for what is now called the Edward D. Jones Dome. The facility’s governance falls under the City-County Convention and Visitors Commission.

A conceptually similar but financially more complex pattern emerged when the St. Louis Cardinals determined earlier this decade that they needed a new ball park to remain competitive and asked to have part of the project financed with public funds. After substantial negotiations about which jurisdiction would contribute how much in what form, the City of St. Louis agreed to forego its five percent amusement tax on ticket sales, the County committed some of its excess revenues from the hotel-motel tax to underwrite a $45 million bond issue, and the State of Missouri provided $42.7 million in state tax credits and transportation improvements.

In health care, regional cooperation began in 1985 when the City and the County each closed its remaining public hospital and created a nonprofit unit (St. Louis Regional Medical Center) located in the City but within one mile of the County border. After twelve years, the Regional Medical Center, plagued by rising health care costs, morphed into St. Louis ConnectCare, a public-private partnership governed by the City, the County, the area’s two medical schools, and its two largest health care systems. The State of Missouri provides most of the public funding although the City and County also underwrite a portion of the budget.

Since ConnectCare was a decidedly partial approach to health care for the indigent, in 2001 the City and the County combined with the State of Missouri to establish a nonprofit entity, the Regional Health Commission. Its board has three appointments each from the City Mayor and the County Executive, two each by the Governor of Missouri, St. Louis area health system, and St. Louis area primary care clinics, one each from the ConnectCare and the local medical schools, and five at-large community members.

Other Counties

In 1991, the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, and Jefferson County established the St. Louis-Jefferson Solid Waste District. In 2002, St. Charles County made it a quartet. The District funds projects that reduce solid waste and promote recycling. Its revenues come from a tipping fee imposed on waste taken to landfills. The District board is appointed by the participating jurisdictions.

Spurred by St. Louis 2004, a visioning initiative that dominated much of the regional dialogue in the mid-to-late 1990s, voters in the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, and St. Charles approved a 1/10 of a cent sales tax in 2000 for parks and open space. Half of the proceeds remain within the originating county but the other half go to a special district now called Great Rivers Greenway (GRG). GRG has developed an ambitious plan (“The River Ring”) for an interconnected regional set of trails and greenways. It is governed by a ten-member board (five from St. Louis County, three from the City of St. Louis, and two from St. Charles County) appointed by the three
A similar measure was adopted at the same time by Illinois’s two largest counties (Madison and St. Clair) within the region, establishing the Metro East Park and Recreation District (MEPRD). Like its Missouri counterpart, it receives half the proceeds of the 1/10 of a cent sales tax with the other half remaining in the county where the purchase occurred. MEPRD coordinates its planning with GRG and, to date, the cooperation between the two entities is extensive, creating a de facto five-county plan. The Madison and St. Clair County Boards each appoint three members to govern MEPRD.

After the City of St. Louis and St. Clair County submitted separate and unsuccessful applications for federal empowerment zone recognition in 1994, the two along with St. Louis County submitted a joint proposal in 1998 when a second round opened. The proposal was funded and each jurisdiction has representation on its board.

REGIONALISM: NEW AND REINVENTED INSTITUTIONS

These multi-county arrangements have not been the St. Louis region’s sole response to the growing need for regional decision making venues. Like most metropolitan areas, St. Louis has created new entities or reshaped existing organizations to address challenges that crossed government boundaries. Some are quasi-governmental (East West Gateway Council of Governments), some are public-private partnerships (Greater St. Louis Economic Development Council), some are non-profits (FOCUS St. Louis, United Way of Greater St. Louis), and some are private (Civic Progress, Regional Business Council).

Quasi-Governmental

The East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG) began in 1965 as a mechanism for the chief elected officials from the largest units (City of St. Louis, East St. Louis, Madison County, St. Charles County, St. Clair County, and St. Louis County) to meet informally to share views on regional matters. When the national government mandated in 1968 that each region have a metropolitan planning organization to screen and coordinate proposals for federal funding, especially transportation dollars, EWG assumed this role.

Along with the federal mandate came funds for staff to prepare regional plans. That enabled EWG to become a major information center during the 1970s, using a lot of knowledge
to assert a bit of power. Its mandate wings were clipped and the national dollars shrank during the Reagan Administration, but the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act and its successor legislation have reinvigorated it. EWG has used its central role in transportation planning to expand its regional policy agenda to air quality, open space, regional indicators, and work force mobility.

Its monthly board meetings have become the primary locus for the region’s chief elected officials to deliberate. Formal representation now includes the City of St. Louis Mayor and Aldermenic Board President; the St. Louis County Executive and the President of the St. Louis County Municipal League; the East St. Louis Mayor; the County Board Chairs from Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair County; the St. Charles County Executive; the Franklin County and Jefferson County Presiding Commissioners; the President and Vice President of the Southwestern Illinois Council of Mayors; and the President of the Southwestern Illinois Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission. That group, in turn, must appoint ten additional members: seven “regional citizens,” one St. Louis County municipal mayor, one St. Charles County councilperson, and one more Illinois local elected official.

Public-Private Partnership

Economic competition among metropolitan areas intensified substantially since the late 1970s, especially after the Reagan Administration significantly reduced the national government’s role as rescuer of down-and-out areas. It became clear that every region was responsible for its own economy.

That in turn meant that it was critical for metropolitan areas to have a coordinated economic development strategy. Prior to the early 1990s, county-level governmental economic units within the St. Louis area worked separately and seemed to spend as much effort poaching enterprises from other parts of the region as they did seeking businesses from elsewhere. The Regional Commerce (now Chamber) and Growth Association’s (RCGA’s) definition of economic development was largely placing ads in a national publications and then responding to inquiries. There was nothing resembling a strategic game plan.

Spurred by business leaders, most notably then Monsanto CEO Richard Mahoney, governments and businesses formed the Greater St. Louis Economic Development Council whose board includes, ex officio, the City of St. Louis Mayor and St. Louis County Executive as well as top officials from Madison, St. Charles, and St. Clair Counties as well as labor and business representatives.

The Council was placed under RCGA’s operational management and, in a process that included hiring an established economic development leader with an impressive track record in Denver and Atlanta, developed a strategy that concentrates on a few sectors such as biotechnology and financial services and coordinates implementation with each county’s public economic development unit.

Non-Profit Organizations

FOCUS St. Louis is the product of a 1996 merger between a regional leadership program (Leadership Center of Greater St. Louis, formed in 1976) and a citizens league (Confluence St. Louis, founded in 1983). Both shared promoting a regional approach as part of their core mission.

The citizens league component’s major role is identifying issues that need regional attention (e.g., affordable work force housing, emergency preparedness), recruit a citizen task force to
study the issue and make recommendations, and then mobilize to implement the proposed actions. The leadership element includes several programs, most notably Leadership St. Louis, that enable leaders from many sectors to learn more about the region while simultaneously building relationships that cut across traditional lines.

The United Way of Greater St. Louis is the de facto social services coordinating agency for the entire region. Using a federated funding approach, it raises and allocates over $60 million annually to hundreds of non-profit agencies. More than most metropolitan areas, St. Louis traditionally uses new or expanded non-profit organizations to meet social needs like AIDS or homelessness rather than instituting government-run programs.

With its core roots in the Community Fund and Community Chest of bygone days, the United Way has expanded its geographic reach as the metropolitan area has spread out. Various Metro East United Ways were absorbed first in the 1970's (St. Clair County) and then in 1999 (Tri-Cities) and 2001 (Southwest Illinois). On the Missouri side, St. Charles, Lincoln, and Warren Counties were added in 1980 and Franklin County came aboard in 1995.

As with most non-profits, FOCUS St. Louis and the United Way of Greater St. Louis are governed by self-perpetuating boards. Both boards emphasize representation from multiple sectors and all geographies.

Private Units

Although Civic Progress began in 1953 with a City of St. Louis agenda, it too expanded its reach as the region’s geographic coverage spread. It was instrumental in encouraging the United Way to expand and provided much of the funding for regional initiatives like the establishment of the Zoo-Museum District. Especially between the early 1960s and the late 1990s, it was the place to go both for those championing a regional initiative. During this period, Civic Progress’s blessing and, more important, its ability to write large checks, made it almost a necessary albeit not sufficient condition for winning approval. Its ability to finance an initiative—say a ballot proposal for a new special district—remains relevant but otherwise its role in regional decision making is diminished.

Throughout most of its history, the Civic Progress members have preferred to deliberate outside the public eye. There is no office, no staff, no phone, no e-mail. Until recently, it outsourced its staffing to a senior public relations executive at Fleishman Hilliard (Harry Wilson, Sr., then Al Kerth, then Frank
Tom Irwin, a veteran public policy leader whose resume includes major positions with the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County, the State of Missouri, Metro, and RCGA, now fills this role as an independent contractor.

Civic Progress intentionally remains small, capping its membership as no more than thirty firms. As the St. Louis area lost many of its corporate headquarters (e.g., A.G. Edwards, Anheuser Busch, McDonnell Douglas, Ralston Purina, Southwestern Bell), it quietly dropped its tradition of only having locally headquartered companies and allowed the acquiring firms (e.g., Wachovia/Wells Fargo, In Bev, Boeing, Nestle, AT&T) to assume the memberships. In 1998, it added the St. Charles County Executive and the St. Clair County Board Chair to the original pair of ex officio governmental members, the City of St. Louis Mayor and the St. Louis County Executive.

As Civic Progress became more a branch manager entity while continuing to keep a lid on membership, fifty local medium-sized firms founded the Regional Business Council (RBC). It now has one hundred members across a wide range of enterprises: major law firms, mid-cap manufacturers, local banks, and others. Unlike Civic Progress, it has a public face (Clayton office, web site, phone number) and an executive direction, Kathleen Osborn, who has held the position since RBC began.

RBC’s agenda includes economic development, education, quality of life, and regional governance. In recent years, it has taken a special interest in the St. Louis Public Schools. It also houses the region’s Social Venture Partners, a seed capital program for non-profit organizations. Its role representing the area’s business sector rises each year, steadily eclipsing Civic’s Progress previous hegemony.

REFLECTIONS

With its substantial array of regional decision making venues and processes, why does the St. Louis metropolitan area still view itself as the poster region for fragmented government? First, although the number of general purpose governments (municipalities and counties) has remained essentially constant over the past half-century and has declined on a per capita basis, the region still has relatively more than any of its counterparts. Localism is firmly rooted in St. Louis’s soil. Citizens prize the familiarity and access of having government close to them.

Second, St. Louis has many regionalisms instead of just a few. Even this essay’s account of over twenty of them is not exhaustive, failing for example to cover collaborations like Area Resources for Community and Health Services (ARCHS), the Cooperating School Districts (CSD), or the Regional Housing and Community Development Alliance (RHCDA). This complicates media coverage which, absent financial misdoing, still retains a beat system that emphasizes the City of St. Louis municipal government along with St. Louis County government and, to a lesser extent, St. Charles County government. There is no regional beat, no routine coverage of regional decision making bodies. With low media attention, regional decision making becomes much less visible. The unfortunate consequence is a misreading of the area’s willingness and ability to work together.

Although each of these regional developments is sui generis, the St. Louis metropolitan area is gradually balancing its natural local orientation with an accompanying regional perspective. The battles over local versus regional, especially the revolutionary proposals in the late 1950s and early 1960s, are increasingly a distant memory. Instead, there is a growing realization that localism and regionalism are not necessarily antonyms. They increasingly exist in harmony albeit one that requires vigilant attention to maintain a healthy balance.
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About the Author

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Political Engagement: The Decisions That Need to Be Made and How They Should Be Made

James T. Ingram

Introduction

Gazing through the legs of St. Louis’ Gateway Arch and across the Mississippi River, one views a desolate wasteland known as East St. Louis, Illinois. Home of Olympic gold medalists Jackie Joyner-Kersee and Dawn Harper, jazz legend Miles Davis, as well as bearing the historical scars of the barbaric race massacre of 1917, East St. Louis has always been pregnant with vast potential. Yet, because of historically poor and/or corrupt leadership, an exodus of industry and an eroded tax base, East St. Louis has always remained in the geographic and socio-economic shadow of St. Louis, Missouri.

Regional Cooperation: East Side/ West Side

In a real sense, the futures of both East St. Louis and St. Louis are inextricably bound by a single thread of destiny. St. Louis will never benefit by bemoaning the “dangers” of East St. Louis or pointing out, from the vantage point of St. Louis’ skyscrapers or plush hotel suites, how “those people” in East St. Louis should do something with their hideous riverfront. Nor does it behoove East St. Louis leadership to fail to fully (and comprehensively) develop the only real estate in the metropolitan region with a panoramic view of downtown St. Louis. However, the reality is that there has never been a sustained, fruitful or cooperative relationship between the Illinois and Missouri mayors, governors and other factions, over the mutual or collaborative development of the St. Louis and East Louis riverfronts, infrastructure or tourism industry. Like it or not, the collaborative development of both East St. Louis and St. Louis riverfronts will be of mutual benefit, not only these cities, but to the entire region. As East St. Louis goes, so goes St. Louis.

MetroLink

On July 31, 1993 MetroLink made its regional debut, with more than 180,000 riders taking advantage of a three day fare-
free period designed to celebrate the newest incarnation of mass transit for the bi-state area. However, even during MetroLink’s early planning stages, and amid the fanfare, racism was ever-present. The racial buzz revolved around the East St. Louis station potentially becoming the perfect mode of transportation for criminals with aspirations to expand and spread their criminality to remote regions of St. Louis. Fifteen years later, that assumption has proven to be fallacious as well as baseless. In fact, MetroLink data reported a total 24 assaults and 14 robberies, in 2007 (out of 19 million boardings). And despite a much publicized July 26, 2008 incident at St. Louis’ Delmar station, in which a group of teens robbed and assaulted three other teens, a 2002 study by the University of California Transit Center concluded that mass transit systems which pass through crime-ridden urban areas do not transport crime to suburban areas, nor do they have a significant impact on crime trends or crime dislocation. The notion that I (a black man from East St. Louis) might board MetroLink in East St. Louis, get off in Clayton, burglarize some unsuspecting home, rip-off a plasma screen TV and use the same train to transport my ill-gotten gains back to the confines of my East St. Louis home is absurd (even if I were a criminal). This sort of irrational bigotry needlessly tarnishes the reputation of communities like East St. Louis, while depriving those (who promote these “bogey man” theories) of having a MetroLink system which fully services the entire metropolitan region. One classic example extends back to 1998, when MetroLink supporters attempted to bring light rail service to suburban St. Charles County. The measure was defeated amid rumors and innuendo that the system would connect East St. Louis to Mid Rivers Mall. I’d love to poll residents of St. Charles County who sit in bumper-to-bumper traffic, during the ongoing highway construction projects (with $4 per gallon gasoline) and bitter cold St. Louis winters, and ask them who really got hurt in their rejection of MetroLink. Wouldn’t it have been simpler to have convened a council of leadership from each community (and potential communities) along the MetroLink’s span, to dispel the lies and fear-mongering, as well as present a united front to champion the benefits of mass transportation running the full breadth and depth of the metropolitan region? That, however, would require area leadership not contributing to the historical climate of fear and racial intolerance which permeates the St. Louis region.
BIG CITY OR “GLORIFIED PLANTATION”

Despite the St. Louis regions’ isolationist mentality, which limits everything from MetroLink’s expansion to their loss of “international airport status,” most St. Louis natives will overwhelmingly (but delusionally) declare St. Louis to be a “major city.” Then, in the same breath, they’ll ask you “what high school did you attend?” Very cosmopolitan, indeed. Now ask anyone who has ever traveled, and they will quickly inform you that St. Louis, MO is a “glorified town” that aspires to become a “major city.” It only takes a quick 300 mile sojourn to Chicago, to peruse the hustle and bustle of a “real city,” to realize that Michigan Avenue is cons ahead of the dearth of activity which is downtown St. Louis. Chicago, on its slowest night, is busier than St. Louis on its busiest day, and that’s being kind. One would think that the mayors of St. Louis, East St. Louis, approximate neighbors on both sides of the mighty Mississippi River, would put their heads and resources together in order to formulate a master plan to lure tourism and development to the metro-east region. The state divisions are more superficial than actual, but they are seemingly tantamount to an “iron curtain” when it comes to formulating a unified regional development strategy. Perhaps it will take the genius and ingenuity of “non-politicos” to bring it into fruition. Take for example Joe Edwards, the driving force behind the renaissance that has taken place in the Delmar Loop area of University City. Edwards, single-handedly has inspired the development of the most eclectic, cosmopolitan and diverse area of clubs, theatres, restaurants, bars, boutiques and businesses in the St. Louis metropolitan region – bar none. And it works, with everyone from college students to yuppies to an ever growing international presence, all co-existing and interacting, as it should be. The St. Louis region, for many years, was simply a boring black and white, uninviting segregated reality. It will take a Joe Edwards, and those of his ilk, to inspire the vision which is necessary to mastermind a similar plan for the region if St. Louis, East St. Louis and their neighbors are ever to become true national and international players – world citizens.

CRIME

Throughout 2008, KMOV-TV’s “A Shared St. Louis” did an exemplary and unprecedented job of exploring the impact of race, crime and their impact on the St. Louis metropolitan area. The series culminated with a panel discussion at the Missouri History Museum. The panel consisted of area leadership, including
Mayor Francis Slay of St. Louis, Mayor Alvin Parks of East St. Louis, St. Louis County Executive Charlie Dooley, as well as area educators, law enforcement officials and health experts. The televised panel underscored the disproportionate effects of racial segregation on the area’s African-American communities. For instance, one video package (by investigative reporter Craig Cheatham) revealed that of the six St. Louis neighborhoods with the most murders, all were located in the north St. Louis area, with 97% of the population being black. Another video package on vacant house fires disclosed that 75% of St. Louis vacant house fires (in the past two and a half years) occurred in seven north St. Louis neighborhoods, with 93% of the residents being African-American. Such disparities, as yet another video package underscored, led to a horrific episode (in 2008) in which an irate black resident from the predominantly African-American Meacham Park area of Kirkwood, Missouri went on a murdering spree in which he shot and murdered a number of white city officials during a city council meeting. Open dialogue (such as that held by KMOV), arguably, may have prevented the murders in Meacham Park.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS: FROM MISEDUCATION TO EDUCATION

As one who feels, despite a modest upbringing in economically challenged East St. Louis, Illinois, that I received an excellent public school education, I am appalled at the rapidly diminishing state of public schools on both sides of the Mississippi River-- particularly among African-American youth. At East St. Louis Sr. High, I took Latin, organic chemistry, qualitative analysis, physics and composition & research. Yet, one generation later, 11th graders can barely read, with 85 % unable to read at the minimum acceptable level, as defined by the state of Illinois. The sad truth is that East St. Louis School District 189 has, for decades, has been more focused on practicing nepotism and cronism than being about the business of education. Parents chronically fail to attend parent-teacher conferences or school board meetings, and have failed to hold East St. Louis school superintendents and board presidents (past and present) accountable for malfeasance and “educational malpractice.” The St. Louis Public Schools are no better. Their problem stems, primarily, from many of the same ailments which plague East St. Louis Public Schools, and are further compounded by instability of leadership. In 2008, for example, Kelvin Adams became the seventh superintendent to take the helm of the beleaguered St. Louis Public Schools. He inherits a school system in which only 50% of high school students graduate, where schools struggle to meet enrollment, attendance and AYP (annual yearly progress) standards. Adams proposes extended school days, increased autonomy for principals, and merit pay for good teachers, as measures to begin rectifying the struggling district. In New Orleans, Adams was instrumental in elevating graduation rates from 39% to 67%, in only one year, following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Already, members of the elected school board are grumbling that, rather than hire Adams, the previous superintendent, Diana Bourisaw, should have been retained. That could, very well, be true. The constant turnover of SLPS superintendents has been a destabilizing force which has undermined the very direction of St. Louis Schools, closely followed by heated battles between the previous superintendents and the political antics of their respective school board members. Whoever the superintendent, be it in East St. Louis or St. Louis, parental involvement (in the education of their children) is crucial in neutralizing the incessant politicization of the educational process on both sides of the river. The overwhelming presence of parents at school board meetings, scrutinizing expenditures, hiring decisions, indifference, arrogance and lack of progress would force educators, teachers and administrators to function at their highest capacity or be replaced. If parents continue to abdicate their political and parental responsibilities, public education in the metro–east will continue to produce ill-prepared students who will be inca-
pable of intellectually competing on the world stage.

CONCLUSION

By and large, if the election of Barack Obama (as America’s first African-American President of the United States) proves anything, it reveals that with the proper message, controversy, race and adversity can be overcome if the proper dialogue is afforded. Obama addressed the issue of race with dignity and skillfully redirected Americans to that which we all have in common, with a manner and style which disarmed enough and energized enough Americans to realize his monumental achievement. What then, could accomplished by politicians and leadership in the St. Louis region, with a similar approach and methodology. KMOV and their “A Shared St. Louis” is on to something. What if a broader array of area leadership were assembled for public forums (on an ongoing basis) under the scrutiny of the public eye, covering a vast array of crucial issues until common ground and a common mission are achieved regionally? With an ever worsening economy, yet a hopeful political spirit (nationally), the timing is right. The St. Louis bi-state and its antiquated, territorial approach has failed and will continue to fail until a more unified, comprehensive regional approach is embarked upon and realized. The question becomes how many more jobs must be lost, how long will racial tensions continue to exist and how long will this region continue its mediocre existence before realizing that the ultimate solution lies in their regional collectivism?
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About the Author

James Ingram is a columnist for the *St. Louis American* newspaper. The Boston University alumnus is also head writer for InBox Magazine and Ohhmy Online.

In addition, James is a graduate of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Learning Lab and Change Leadership Program at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education.

The East St. Louis, Illinois native has also written for the *East St. Louis Monitor*, was featured in the documentary *Bloody Island*, which chronicles East St. Louis Race Riots of 1917 and served as Press Secretary to former East St. Louis Mayor Carl E. Officer.

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*Photo by Wiley Photo*
CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE BUILDING REGIONAL RESILIENCE IN ST. LOUIS
Todd Swanstrom and Jeremy W. Main

INTRODUCTION

Regional resilience can be defined as the ability of metropolitan areas to redeploy assets, expand organizational repertoires, and collaborate across sectors in response to external challenges. The concept of resilience focuses attention not on the success of regions but on their ability to adapt to new circumstances and constantly reinvent themselves in the face of challenges. In the face of rapid economic change and environmental challenges, regions that are not flexible and adaptive will fail in the long-run. Regions can ride on their legacies of past successes, such as a prosperous industrial economy for years, but in the long run they will fail if they do not adapt to new circumstances.

St. Louis faces many daunting challenges. We define a challenge as an external force or stressor that can interfere with the healthy functioning of a region. Economic restructuring, the decline of the urban core and wasteful suburban sprawl, and racial polarization constitute the three primary challenges facing the region. Resilience in the face of such challenges involves responding in order to reduce their negative effects as well as shaping, if possible, the underlying forces that generate the challenges in the first place.

In this chapter we first outline the main challenges facing the St. Louis region. We then examine the institutional and cultural factors that both constrain and enable regional resilience. Barriers to resilience include a weak central city, fragmented governmental institutions, and a culture of privatism. At the same time, the region has a number of factors that enable resilience, including regional special districts, a robust civic sector, and strong universities. We discuss how resilient the St. Louis region has been in the face of three big challenges and end the article by recommending actions that could be taken to nurture greater regional resilience.
CHALLENGES FACING THE ST. LOUIS REGION

Located at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, St. Louis has a pioneering history as a river city and hub of westward expansion. Its signature monument, the Gateway Arch, harkens back to that history. With 2.804 million people, St. Louis ranked as the 18th largest metropolitan area in the country in 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Located in the middle of the country, St. Louis has had a relatively small influx of immigrants and slow but steady population growth in recent decades. St. Louis has many strengths, including impressive urban amenities such as Forest Park, relatively affordable housing, strong local communities, and dynamic economic sectors in medical services, biotech, and aerospace. The central city has enjoyed substantial new investments in recent years and population loss has been slowed to a near halt. The region boasts a light rail line with a recently completed branch that is reaching a record number of riders, the first bi-state regional parks and trails initiative in the nation, and strong regional support for museums and the arts.

While the strengths of the St. Louis region are to be celebrated, the region faces substantial challenges. The core urban counties continue to lose population while they struggle to recover from the loss of manufacturing jobs. In contrast, the St. Louis region now spans 16 counties and 8,649 square miles, making St. Louis a prototypical sprawled out Midwestern metropolis growing primarily on the suburban fringe. One of the most governmentally fragmented metropolitan areas in the nation, St. Louis remains highly segregated along racial and economic lines. In short, economic restructuring, uneven and sprawling metropolitan development, and racial polarization constitute three primary challenges facing the St. Louis region. We address each of these below.

Economic Restructuring

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the St. Louis region in recent decades has been the loss of well-paying manufacturing jobs. Like many other Midwestern cities, the city of St. Louis was devastated by the loss of manufacturing jobs. According to the Census of Manufacturers, between 1977 and 2002, the city of St. Louis lost two-thirds of its manufacturing jobs, falling from 92,600 to 25,500. Among seven Midwestern cities, only Cleveland lost a higher proportion of its manufacturing jobs. The rapid loss of manufacturing jobs in St. Louis City and East
St. Louis have led to stagnating median family incomes and high rates of poverty in these cities.\(^4\) While the degree of economic restructuring in the city of St. Louis is likely extreme compared to the metropolitan area as a whole, manufacturing employment has continued to decline in the region, falling from 206,000 in 1990 to 135,000 in 2007.\(^5\)

The manufacturing sector still makes up the second largest segment of the regional workforce. Approximately 12 percent of the regional workforce is employed in manufacturing, with significant employment in aerospace and automobile production. These segments, however, are showing significant signs of decline. Boeing, which merged with St. Louis-based McDonnell Douglas in 1997, is one of the largest employers in the region. Over the past two decades, however, job losses have cut their employees in the region from 40,000 to 16,000.\(^6\) The region once maintained a vibrant automobile manufacturing base, second to Detroit in domestic car production. Several of these plants are now closing or experiencing large layoffs. The Ford plant in north St. Louis County officially closed in 2006. At its peak, the plant employed more than 2,500 workers. The Chrysler mini-van plant in the southern part of the region also recently lost 1,078 of its 2,546 jobs.

The region has struggled to build a high-skilled, high-wage substitute for manufacturing. The St. Louis region ranked 28\(^{th}\) out of 35 peer regions in “growth in gross metropolitan product per capita” and in “high-tech sector output growth” relative to the nation. St. Louis ranks rather low, 68\(^{th}\), on Richard Florida’s “creativity index,” a composite index designed to capture the degree to which a region is attractive to creative class workers.\(^7\) One Milken Institute study, however, classified St. Louis as a “Tech Pole” – an area with the potential to attract high-tech industry, defined as “industries that spend an above-average amount of revenue on research and development and that employ an above industry-average number of technology-using occupations.”\(^8\) It is probably fair to say that the region has been able to nurture some high-tech employment, but not nearly as much as other regions, such as Boston and Chicago, that had previously relied on manufacturing.

### Declining Urban Core and Wasteful Suburban Sprawl

With no natural barriers to land development, the St. Louis region has sprawled out into the fringes of the 16-county region. Like many Midwestern regions, land consumption in the St. Louis metropolitan area has greatly outpaced population growth. From 1982-1997, the region’s population grew by only 6 percent, yet urbanized land grew 25 percent ranking St. Louis as having one of the least efficient patterns of land development in the nation.\(^9\) This thinning out of the region presents two closely related challenges: 1) core urban decline creates pockets of poverty that generate social problems; 2) low-density living patterns drive up energy consumption and the cost of urban infrastructure and public services.

One of the most telling statistics about the metropolitan area is that in the second half of the Twentieth Century (1950-2000) the population of the central city fell by over half a million, from about 857,000 to 348,000. Population decline has now spread to St. Louis County. Once-thriving inner-ring suburbs in St. Louis County - Clayton, University City, and Overland - experienced population losses of 6 percent or more from 1990 to 2000. Small, poor, and largely black suburbs in north St. Louis County lost 25 percent or more of their population.\(^10\) Located west of the Missouri River, St. Charles County has been the largest beneficiary of this outward migration, increasing in population by one-third in the 1990s. By 2006 the population of St. Charles County (338,719) was approaching that of the City of St. Louis.

Additionally, jobs are moving further from the urban core. The St. Louis metropolitan area
has among the highest rates of job sprawl in the country. Less than 10 percent of metropolitan employment resides within the urban core while nearly 60 percent of employment is over 10 miles away. In the 1990s, St. Charles County added almost 40,000 jobs and enjoyed an increase in median family income that put it well ahead of the regional median. Its poverty rate fell slightly from 5% to 4%. St. Charles County generally lacks affordable housing and has only recently begun programs to remedy the shortage. While jobs move further outward, most of the region’s poor remain in the center. St. Louis City holds nearly one third of the poor and poverty rates in inner-ring suburbs like Clayton and Brentwood nearly doubled in the 1990s.

Suburban sprawl has also been costly for the region and burdensome for both growing and declining areas. While an expanding roadway system has made decentralization possible, it has led to increased costs both in time and money. St. Louisians averaged 24.6 minutes a day in travel time to work each way. Although travel time increased nearly 12 percent between 1982 and 2003, St. Louis still ranked below average compared to peer metropolitan areas. St. Louisians spent 20.4 percent of their household expenditures on transportation in 2000, up from 17.7 percent in 1990. Extensive automobile use has led to poorer air quality and days with unhealthy air have now exceeded Kansas City and Chicago combined.

Suburban sprawl drives costs in ways that will be increasingly difficult to absorb. At the same time that public and parochial schools in the City of St. Louis are closing, some students in growing suburbs use mobile trailers for classrooms, while their districts spend millions on new construction. Just maintaining the extensive system of highways, many of which are rated as “poor” or “very poor”, will be very expensive. The metropolitan planning organization, East-West Gateway, estimates a shortfall of $2.485 billion for highway preservation and construction costs between 2007 and 2030.

Racial Polarization

Poor race relations in the region are another significant challenge. Race has played a critical role in shaping the economic, spatial, and political arrangements in the metropolitan area. The 1917 East St. Louis riots were one of the deadliest race riots in American history. The regional population is still divided along racial lines, with 96 percent identifying themselves as either white or black/African-American in 2000. As late as 2005, only 1.8 percent identified themselves as Latino/Hispanic and 1.7 percent as Asian.
The gaps between African-Americans and whites in St. Louis are among the highest in the nation. In rankings of 34 metropolitan areas, St. Louis ranked in the top nine or higher on racial disparity in infant mortality, poverty, and college enrollment.\textsuperscript{21} Whites are five times more likely to attend college, while blacks are nearly three times more likely to receive a sub-prime rate on home loans.\textsuperscript{22}

Racial segregation has been a persistent issue for the region. St. Louis City has been identified as one of ten most highly segregated cities on measures of racial housing segregation.\textsuperscript{23} St. Louis City is one of the worst performers on the index of dissimilarity - a 0 to 100 score used to measure the degree to which groups live in separate neighborhoods. (The score reflects the percentage of blacks who would have to move to make a uniform distribution of racial groups across census tracts.) From 1940 through 1980, the region held constant at roughly 84 percent. The overall region has improved on the dissimilarity index since 1980, but the region performs worse on this measure than the average metropolitan area. In 2000, the white-African-American dissimilarity index was 67.3 percent, while the largest 192 metro areas averaged 41.3 percent. St. Louis remains one of the most segregated regions in the nation.

Race relations in St. Louis have a semi-Southern feel. Missouri was a slave state, but after trying to stay neutral, the state government was taken over by Union forces during the Civil War. It was a border state, however, and fighting, including vicious guerrilla warfare, was waged across the state. St. Louis, however, was controlled by Union forces throughout the war. Until the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s St. Louis was an officially segregated city.\textsuperscript{24} In 1916 the voters overwhelmingly passed a racial zoning ordinance, but a similar ordinance in Louisville was struck down the next year by the U. S. Supreme Court (Buchanan v. Warley) making St. Louis’s ordinance unconstitutional. Subsequently, the real estate industry promoted restrictive covenants that forbade homeowners to sell to blacks and confined blacks to selected blocks. Development initiatives such as urban renewal and more recently the use of tax increment financing (TIF) have reinforced segregated living patterns.\textsuperscript{25} The Civil Rights movement was active in St. Louis and legal segregation ended. However, white flight from St. Louis has behind a city school system that is overwhelmingly black and widely perceived as dysfunctional.

Recent controversy at the St. Louis City Fire Department highlights the continued racial tensions in the region. A 2004 lawsuit claimed that tests used to promote St. Louis firefighters were racially biased. The city’s first black fire chief, Sherman George, refused to promote a group of mostly white candidates under the testing program. Mayor Francis Slay demoted George and replaced him with a white fire chief. The incident received national attention and led to a recall petition against the mayor supported by black leaders in the city.

Lacking large-scale immigration that create more diversity and cut across the black-white divide, St. Louis remains mired in black-white suspicion and hostility. However, the 2004 election by a wide margin of the first black St. Louis County Executive, Charley Dooley, is a sign of racial progress.

**BARRIERS TO RESILIENCE**

Regional resilience is the ability of metropolitan areas to redeploy assets, expand organizational repertoires, and collaborate across sectors and local governments in response to external challenges. Given this definition, the St. Louis region is characterized by three significant barriers to its ability to adapt to contemporary economic and environmental challenges: a weak central city, fragmented governmental institutions, and a culture of privatism.
**Weak Central City**

The separation of St. Louis City from St. Louis County in 1876 was a pivotal moment in the region’s history. Proponents of separation took advantage of the 1875 state constitution to draft a municipal charter for St. Louis City and officially separate the city and county. As a result, the city’s geographical boundaries have been fixed at 61.37 square miles for over 130 years. Fixing the city’s borders more or less guaranteed central city decline. St. Louis fell from the 8th most populous city in 1950 to 49th in 2000. The central city now represents only 13 percent of the population of the region.

The creation of a poor and majority black central city has accentuated racial and class divisions between city and suburbs. Arguably, the weakness of the central city has harmed the economic progress of the entire region. At the time of the split, the City of St. Louis was also made its own county, so that county functions cannot be funded by a broader suburban tax base as in most other metropolitan areas.

The City of St. Louis has a weak-mayor, ward-based form of government. The city is divided into twenty-eight wards, which elect representatives to the Board of Aldermen. To this day, ward leaders hand out patronage jobs and contracts. The mayor shares budgetary power with the Comptroller and the President of the Board of Aldermen and appoints few department heads. Separate county functions are run by eight elected officeholders who manage their own mini-patronage operations. St. Louis has machine-style politics, but, unlike Chicago, it has no boss or centralized party.

The weak-mayor, ward-based system has hampered the ability of the city to address its problems and has saddled the city with the negative image of a corrupt political machine. Payrolls are padded by political appointees and ward leaders can veto or demand side payments for economic development projects in their ward. Efforts to streamline and strengthen St. Louis government have been thwarted by a split between business elites and working class and minority ward-based interests. Reform efforts in 1950 and 1957 were defeated by well organized ward-based opposition. Hopes for reform were renewed in 2002, when voters passed an amendment to the Missouri Constitution that gave St. Louis home rule authority over its county functions. Charter amendments placed on the 2004 ballot were defeated once again, largely by black and working class voters who feared a business takeover of city government.
Fragmented Governmental Institutions

St. Louis is the prototypical inelastic city: the central city boundaries have not changed since 1876. David Rusk ranks St. Louis as having “zero elasticity” and the gap between the central city and the suburbs is among the largest in the country. St. Louis ranks just behind Pittsburgh in the ratio of local governments to citizens. There are 91 municipal governments in St. Louis County alone, with 54 having less than 5,000 population in 2000. With an estimated population in 2006 of 1,230, St. George, for example, is roughly the size of the average suburban subdivision.

The effect of having so many small general- and special-purpose governments is that public service provision is uneven and sometimes inefficient, with governments lacking professionalism and failing to realize economies of scale. A good example is police. The St. Louis metropolitan area has 123 separate police jurisdictions, with per capita spending on local law enforcement varying from $52 to $3,614 per year in 2002. Generally, the jurisdictions with the highest crime rates spend the fewest dollars and vice versa. Police officers’ starting salaries ranged from $13,000 to $50,000 in 2002. Fiscally strapped departments are forced to hire police officers with little training and sometimes with criminal records. Many departments are poor at criminal prosecutions but write thousands of questionable speeding tickets to raise revenues. The problem of underfunded, inefficient, and amateurish police departments is mitigated by collaborative arrangements. Many small and medium-sized municipalities contract with the Saint Louis County Police Department for patrol, criminal investigation, operational support, and special operations services.

A 1988 study of local government in St. Louis County by the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations concluded that much more coordination existed between governments than most people recognize. Many small jurisdictions contract with St. Louis County for services, such as jails, thus achieving economies of scale and professionalism. The report is correct about many public services but economic development and land-use planning are highly fragmented and uncoordinated. Local governments engage in a beggar-thy-neighbor competition for tax revenues, eroding their ability to raise tax revenues in the long run. Cities and towns in Missouri rely upon sales taxes for general fund revenues at almost four times the rate of cities and towns nationwide. Liberal tax increment financing (TIF) laws enable local governments to TIF half of all sales tax revenue and all of the additional property taxes from a new project. A 2009 report by the East-West Gateway Council of Governments estimated conservatively that local governments in eight counties in the region committed over $2.5 billion in tax incentives over a 15 year period. If tax abatements were included, for which adequate data is not presently available, the East-West Gateway Council of Governments estimate that the total could double. There is little evidence that the incentives are targeted toward blighted parts of the region, as called for in the original legislation. TIFs move retail sales around the region but do little to expand the regional economy. By draining revenue, they increase fiscal stress on local governments and school districts.

Since the 1876 separation, St. Louis has made repeated attempts to reunite city and county. Efforts in the 1920s, 1950s, and 1960s all ended in failure. A proposal by a Board of Freeholders to reduce the number of municipalities in St. Louis County to 37 was struck down on procedural grounds by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1989. Reform proposals have historically been backed by elite organizations, like Civic Progress. (For background on Civic Progress see the later section on the civic sector.) The growing disparities between the city and the county have made these efforts more difficult over the years.

While city-county consolidation has failed, the number of local general-purpose governments has remained stable over the past fifty years. In just the core city-county area, separate
governments exist for St. Louis City, St. Louis County and 91 area municipalities. Forty percent of the 868 local governments in the region are general-purpose governments. Limited revenue sharing in St. Louis County has helped many smaller municipalities remain fiscally viable. In 2005, two St. Louis County municipalities, Richmond Heights and Clayton, formed a joint commission to evaluate costs and benefits of consolidation. Opposition to consolidation was surprisingly strong and in 2007 the commission deemed the merger too costly in time and effort and recommended against consolidation. The failure of these two prosperous municipalities to merge suggests that the number of municipalities will not be reduced by negotiated consolidations. Citizens are attached to their local governments and county or regional efforts that threaten local powers will be met with resistance.

St. Louis lacks a formal general-purpose regional authority; governance in the metropolitan area is left to processes of competition or informal collaboration usually initiated by the civic sector. Voting patterns highlight divisions within the region, particularly between the city and surrounding counties. Partly because of these divisions, the region lacks political clout in state government proportional to its size. The split between Missouri and Illinois presents another barrier to regional collaboration, although it offers a federal advantage in its potential to mobilize up to four U. S. senators to advocate for regional issues.

The St. Louis metropolitan area is politically divided along urban-suburban lines, with the tendency to vote Republican increasing the further you move out from the center. The Democratic Party began to take hold in the City of St. Louis in 1933 and the last time a Republican held office was 1969. The city gave Obama 83.7 percent of the vote in 2008. Within the city, political loyalties are divided along ward boundaries and racial lines. Turnout among the largely African-American population in the north and the primarily white population in the south can determine the success or failure of candidates and proposals. Ward-based political alliances make power difficult to consolidate and resistance from factional elements more likely. African-American distrust and ward-based resistance were key factors in the defeat of the most recent charter reform effort.

With over a million people, St. Louis County is the largest county in the state. Republicans held the county executive position until the 1990s and Democrats have controlled the position ever since. Generally, less urbanized portions of St. Louis County vote Republican while urbanized sections vote
Democrat. Overall, St. Louis County has trended from a classic swing county to reliably Democratic in recent years, giving Obama 59.5 percent of the vote in 2008. By contrast, suburban St. Charles County gave McCain 54.4 percent of the vote. St. Charles County is controlled at all levels by Republicans. Urbanized counties in Illinois have largely supported Democrats at the county and state levels.

Differences between the solidly Democratic city and the mixed or Republican outlying counties present obstacles to regional collaboration. The city is viewed as a political machine, while the counties see themselves, often unrealistically, as bastions of good government run by professional city managers. St. Louis City and County have moved somewhat closer in recent years. The County’s first African-American executive Charley Dooley and St. Louis City Mayor Francis Slay have collaborated on issues like the new Cardinals stadium and homelessness.

St. Charles County has a tense relationship with the city and inner-ring counties, but it understands its need to become a larger regional actor. Former Republican County Executive Joe Ortwerth objected to the word “sprawl” and insisted on using “urban choice” instead. St. Charles County has now surpassed the City of St. Louis in votes and is a major competitor to St. Louis City and County in attracting jobs and residents in the region. St. Charles’ voters twice rejected being included in the regional public transit system, although the second vote on light rail was complicated by St. Louis County’s hesitation to support extending the line from Lambert Airport to the county border. This extension would be necessary to connect St. Charles County with the existing line. Despite those failures, leaders in St. Charles County have increasingly recognized the need for planning to lessen traffic congestion and maintain a high quality of life. Voting to impose a 1/10th of a cent sales tax to become part of the Great Rivers Greenway regional trail system is indicative of changing attitudes.

The region’s influence in the capital, Jefferson City, has been weak especially since the Republicans took control of both houses of the legislature in 2002. The new governor, Jay Nixon, is from Jefferson County but has strong political ties throughout the state. The previous two Missouri governors (Blunt and Holden) had their primary bases of support in rural and small town Missouri. Bids for the governorship by urban Democrats often end in failure. Recent runs for governor by St. Louis County’s Claire McCaskill, a former long-term resident of Jackson County in the Kansas City region, and former St. Louis Mayor Vince Schoemehl ended in defeat. State support for the metropolitan area is minimal. The State of Missouri, for example, gives only minimal aid to public transportation in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Not until the public transit system faced a huge deficit did the State agree in 2007 not to collect the sales taxes on fuel for the buses.

The split between Missouri and Illinois also makes regional cooperation difficult, as illustrated by the difficulty of coming to an agreement to build a new Mississippi River Bridge. Despite having won the largest earmark ($239 million) in the 2005 reauthorization of transportation law (SAFETEA-LU) for a new Mississippi River Bridge, Illinois and Missouri were deadlocked for years on exactly what kind of bridge to build and how to pay for it. With more Illinois commuters predicted to use the bridge, Illinois agreed to commit hundreds of millions of dollars to the project. But Missouri held out for a private bridge funded by tolls, perhaps reflecting the reluctance of Missouri Governor Matt Blunt to commit additional state tax monies to the St. Louis metropolitan area. In February 2008 the two states finally agreed on a scaled down publicly owned bridge costing $640 million, much less than original plans for a “signature” bridge costing as much as $1.6 billion.
A Culture of Privatism

The culture of the region reflects its historical spirit of pioneering expansion and individualism. According to Daniel Elazar (1984), both Illinois and Missouri have “individualistic” political cultures. St. Louis culture is “like many Clydesdale horses – strong and proud, but pulling in all sorts of directions at once.” Distrustful of large, distant government, St. Louisans prefer the smaller, local feel of municipal governments. The multiple municipalities provide a wide range of choice in living arrangements and tastes and attachment to neighborhoods and smaller aldermanic wards gives a local flavor to city governments. According to local lore, one of the first things St. Louisans ask upon meeting for the first time is: “What high school did you go to?” Complex governing arrangements are partly a product of this culture where local attachments trump regional commitments. Professional sports franchises are one of the few unifying forces, especially the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team which enjoys strong fan support throughout the region.

Surveys conducted by the East-West Gateway Council of Governments support this notion. When asked “How closely connected is the quality of life in St. Louis City to your community?”, only seven percent of citizens in the surrounding counties answered “very close.” Similarly, citizens in St. Louis City and County felt only slightly more connection to their neighboring counties. The disconnect between the two sides of the Mississippi was even more dramatic: Only six percent of Illinois county residents felt a close connection between their quality of life and their Missouri counterparts, while only five percent of Missouri respondents felt a connection to Illinois. A slight majority of respondents, however, felt that problems in the City of St. Louis and East St. Louis affected all communities and even more favored adding counties to the Zoo-Museum District.

SOURCES OF RESILIENCE

In a region where a culture of privatism has repeatedly defended governmental fragmentation and a rigidly decentralized metropolitan government structure, opportunities for regional resilience can be found in institutions that transcend the fragmented boundaries of the metropolis. In St. Louis, these are regional special districts, a robust civic sector, and strong colleges and universities.

Regional Special Districts and Partnerships

Special districts and partnerships are the primary ways that
St. Louis does “regionalism” and builds the capacity to get things done. The most important special districts are Metro (formerly Bi-State Development Agency) (1950), Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District (1954), St. Louis Junior College District (1962), the Zoo-Museum District (1971), and Great Rivers Greenway (GRG) (2000). Metro operates the buses and light rail system in three counties spanning two states, but three of the other four special districts extend only to St. Louis City and County.

All of the regional special districts coordinate functions across the fragmented region and supply important amenities that enhance the quality of life. The Zoo-Museum District includes the Zoo, the Art Museum, the Science Center, the Missouri Historical Society, and the Missouri Botanical Garden. They are all national and even world-class institutions that charge little or no entrance fee. However, key institutions like the St. Louis Symphony have failed in efforts to be included in the District and the fact that growing counties, like St. Charles, are not included weakens the future growth of the district. In the early 1990s Metro built one of the early light rail systems in the country. But subsequently St. Charles County voted twice not to be included in Metro, a blow to creating a coordinated regional transportation system.

In 2000, however, the voters of St. Charles County joined voters in St. Louis city and County and two Illinois counties in approving a regional sales tax dedicated to creating a regional system of connected greenways. The 1/10 of 1 percent tax raises about $21 million on the Missouri side. The vote created the Great Rivers Greenway (GRG) District in Missouri and the Metro East Parks and Recreation District in Illinois, the first special districts for regional greenways in the nation. The vote is notable because it passed in outlying St. Charles County and on both sides of the river, a step forward in regional collaboration.

Multi-county partnerships in the St. Louis region include the Regional Justice Information Service (REJIS), Regional Arts Commission, the Convention and Visitors Commission, and the Metropolitan Taxi Commission. These four partnerships operate primarily in St. Louis County and City of Saint Louis. The Regional Arts Commission and the Convention and Visitors Commission are governed by commissions appointed by the County Executive and City Mayor. Each obtains funding through the hotel/motel tax, although the Convention and Visitors Commission also receives substantial revenue from member dues. Founded in 1976, REJIS is a government entity resulting from a cooperative agreement between St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis. They provide information technology services to
nearly 250 criminal justice and government customers within and outside the St. Louis region. The Metropolitan Taxi Commission provides oversight to the licensing, regulation, and enforcement of vehicle for hire services in the region.

A Robust Civic Sector

St. Louis has a vibrant civic sector. This comes as no surprise to some scholars of metropolitan governance. In his 2004 chapter on the study of metropolitan governance, Ronald Oakerson suggests that fragmented (or polycentric) metropolitan areas create more civic space within which entrepreneurs can emerge to collaborate for problem solving. The St. Louis region certainly embraces one side of the equation: fragmentation. St. Louis 2004, the mid-1990s civic planning effort supported by the Danforth Foundation, suggests the region has had, and can continue to produce, the other half of the equation: a robust civic sector that plays a key leadership role across issue areas.

FOCUS-St. Louis is the most prominent civic engagement organization involved in region-wide issues. The organization is a result of a 1996 merger between two earlier civic groups - Confluence St. Louis and the Leadership Center of Greater St. Louis. Confluence St. Louis was known for being one of the first organizations to address the region's racial polarization and the Leadership Center had trained hundreds of leaders to become regional citizens. Focus-St. Louis has continued these traditions. Serving primarily as a forum for discussing pressing regional issues, FOCUS rarely twists arms or gets directly involved in the political arena.

The Regional Chamber and Growth Association (RCGA), formed in 1963, is a major civic organization that speaks for large corporations in the region. For decades its main functions were advocating for regional infrastructure and promoting the region to outside investors. Since its restructuring in 1994, however, it has played a significant role in economic strategic planning and development efforts. Its recent slogan is “St! Louis: Perfectly Centered, Remarkably Connected.” The Greater St. Louis Economic Development Council brings together Civic Progress, RCGA, business and labor leaders, and public officials to encourage cooperation on economic development and policy issues. In 2000, RCGA helped establish the Regional Business Council to “unite and engage” business executives from medium-sized companies in the region. The Council works collaboratively with RCGA, Civic Progress, and other civic organizations on issues impacting the business climate and quality of life in the region.

The St. Louis region has a large number of foundations and philanthropies but only one of them is closely identified with regional issues. The Danforth Foundation, established in 1927, has played an important role in the region for decades, developing a regional report card in 1999 (RegionWise) and leading the St. Louis 2004 civic planning effort. Since 1997, the foundation has committed itself to funding only projects in the St. Louis region, concentrating mostly on plant and life sciences and major gifts to Washington University. The United Way of Greater St. Louis is also an important actor in the region. In 2007, the United Way distributed thirty-one $102,500 grants to community organizations and churches.

Founded in 1953, Civic Progress represents elite business interests in the region. Composed of the CEOs of the 30 largest companies in the region, it now also includes non-voting ex-officio representatives from St. Louis City, St. Louis, St. Charles and St. Clair counties and three major universities in the region (Saint Louis University, Washington University and the University of Missouri-St. Louis). Initially working on issues in the city, the organization now addresses major regional issues. Civic Progress provided most of the funds for the successful tax to fund the light
rail system in 1994. Many people feel that the power of Civic Progress is overrated. Civic Progress can generate significant sums of money quickly, but it usually responds to proposals and does not set the agenda. As companies have moved their headquarters out of St. Louis, Civic Progress has lost some of its clout. Its proposals to reform county government functions in the City of St. Louis lost badly in 2004.

At a more grassroots level, St. Louis has a wide range of nonprofits that work on community issues. In the area of housing and community development, St. Louis has relatively few community development corporations (CDCs) compared to other cities. A study of community development in Cleveland, Indianapolis, and St. Louis concluded that less money was available for community development activities in St. Louis partly due to “the absence of a robust network of CDCs.” Beyond Housing is a regional nonprofit that focuses on comprehensive community renewal, targeting its efforts on the stressed inner-ring suburb of Pagedale. The Regional Housing and Community Development Alliance (RHCDA) and the Area Resources for Community and Human Services (ARCHS) are involved in coordinating community development activities. In addition, the Saint Louis Association of Community Organizations (SLACO) convenes annual conferences of all the St. Louis area community organizations.

Finally, St. Louis has a number of think-tanks and research institutions that are active on regional issues. The biggest contributors to regional research are the East-West Gateway Council of Governments and RCGA. East-West Gateway has produced five editions of *Where We Stand* that compare the St. Louis region to its peers, highlighting where the region comes up short. Both East-West Gateway and RCGA are limited in the ability to push the envelope on regional issues by governing boards that are slanted toward suburban and more conservative constituencies. Several university research centers, including the Public Policy Research Center (PPRC) at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, RegionWise at Saint Louis University, and the Institute for Urban Research at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, engage regional issues. PPRC has put out a series of scholarly books on the region published by the Missouri Historical Society. Washington University, the richest area university, has demonstrated a local urban presence through its Schools of Architecture, Law, and Social Work and is working to develop its newly established urban studies major and urban research center. Recently, a local philanthropist established the Show-Me Institute, which does research on regional issues from a
free-market, libertarian point of view.

**Strong Universities**

The region also supports twenty-five four-year degree universities and several community colleges. Washington University, Saint Louis University, the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and Southern Illinois University Edwardsville have been involved regionally. William Danforth is a former chancellor of Washington University and member of the Danforth Foundation. Raymond Tucker was a Washington University professor who was mayor of St. Louis and headed Civic Progress during its formative years. Saint Louis University opted to stay in the midtown area of St. Louis City during the worst period of central city decline. Saint Louis University is involved in the revitalization of the Midtown area, but is viewed with skepticism by the African-American community which sees its expansion as threatening nearby neighborhoods.

St. Louis also maintains a vibrant community college network. In 1962, St. Louis City and County created the St. Louis Junior College District in order to provide funding for the community college system. Community colleges in St. Charles County, Jefferson County, Franklin County and Southwestern Illinois round out the system, though they are not part of the special district.

**CONCLUSION: THE PROSPECTS FOR RESILIENCE**

We conclude with some thoughts about the prospects for regional resilience in the St. Louis region in the years ahead. How will St. Louis respond to the challenges of economic restructuring, sprawl and urban decline, and racial polarization? Clearly, these challenges are daunting and the prospects, at best, are mixed. Here, however, we choose to look at the glass as half full, emphasizing the assets and opportunities that could be the basis for renewed regional resilience. In each case, we argue, the key to resilience is greater diversity – economically, geographically, and racially.

The St. Louis regional economy already has a fair degree of diversity that gives it more resilience than metropolitan areas like Detroit, that rely on one industrial sector like autos. Within manufacturing the region has become more diverse over the years. In 1990 St. Louis and St. Charles counties were quite dependent on aerospace, and therefore vulnerable to declines in defense spending or the airline industry. But now both counties have a
more diverse manufacturing economy. St. Louis City has long a diversified manufacturing base.57 According to one study, the St. Louis region has high growth prospects in motor vehicles and equipment, aerospace, hydraulic cement, primary nonferrous smelting and refining, and railroads.58 We have a diverse productive base.

Growth in high-tech industries and innovation, however are the key to rising incomes. Two key high-tech clusters with prospects for growth in St. Louis are health care sector and biotech. Health care is one sector that has enjoyed growth in relatively well-paid jobs. In the late 1990s, the industry composed just over 11 percent of regional employment and had grown over 43 percent since 1987.59 Today, Barnes-Jewish-Christian (BJC) Health Care is the largest employer in the region with 25,606 employees. Three health care companies are among the top ten employers in the region. The medical schools at Washington University and Saint Louis University supply highly trained employees for the region.

One high-tech sector that has received policy attention in recent years is biotechnology.60 Based on a Battelle Memorial Institute Study, the region branded itself the “Biobelt, a center of innovation in plant and life sciences.” Monsanto is among the corporate leaders in plant sciences research. Over the past decade, substantial investments have been made in the region in this area. In 2002, the region had a location quotient of 1.08 in plant and life sciences, eight percent above the national average.61 In 2003, the Missouri Life Sciences Trust Fund was created to receive twenty five percent of the state’s tobacco settlement. To date, concerns over stem cell research in the state legislature have prevented the fund from receiving any appropriations. The Biobelt cluster is only a tiny portion of the regional workforce but its prospects for growth are strong.

In order to be a resilient region, we need not only a diverse economy but a diversity of places to live. According to Richard Florida the creative class, high-tech workers who drive innovation, favor tolerant urban environments with quality places that have an urban buzz. He uses a “gay index” as one marker of a creative class city. St. Louis did not rank high on any of Florida’s creativity indices. Disagreeing with Florida, Joel Kotkin argues that high-tech workers are attracted to stable, family friendly environments, or what he calls “nerdistans.”62 St. Louis is known for its family-friendly suburbs and this is undoubtedly a strength of the region. Whatever you think of Florida’s theory, St. Louis does not have nearly the quality or quality of vibrant urban environments with a diversity of lifestyle choices that have
attracted young professionals in Chicago or Minneapolis. Healthy regions need a diversity of places to live.

In recent years, however, St. Louis has begun to develop more vibrant, diverse, pedestrian-friendly environments – the Central West End, Soulard, South Grand, Shaw Park, Lafayette Square, the University City Loop, and the loft district on Washington Avenue downtown. If these areas reach a critical mass and begin to interact with each other, the city could take off. Light rail is crucial to developing neighborhoods with high levels of density and diversity. Unfortunately, in November 2008 the voters turned down a proposal for a ½ cent sales tax in St. Louis County to expand the system. Given the huge cost overrun in the Cross-County extension, the unsuccessful lawsuit, and the tough economic times, what is surprising is not that Prop M lost but that it lost by such a slim margin (less than 16,000 votes out of over half a million cast). This suggests that there is strong support for expanding the system.

The St. Louis region is fortunate to have a successful light rail line in place that has excellent ridership. What is missing is a vision of a regional system, linking all parts of the region on both sides of the river. Metro and civic groups are planning to embark on just such a regional planning process. There is no reason why St. Charles, Jefferson, and other outlying counties cannot be included in the plan, creating a polynucleated metropolis with a rejuvenated urban core. Revitalizing the urban core will also help to address the economic and racial disparities that have bedeviled the region.

The most difficult and discouraging challenge facing the region is the racial divide. The St. Louis region often seems stuck in the politics of racial grievance and backlash. The St. Louis city schools are persistently hampered by racial politics. Many in the black community view the state takeover as racially motivated but the performance of the district under black leadership has been less than stellar. With the population of the city almost evenly divided among blacks and whites, each side fears that the other is trying to take over. One of the hopeful trends is that the racial scene in the St. Louis region is becoming more diverse, with the Hispanic population expanding rapidly, albeit from a low base.

Debilitating racial politics seems to be prospering in St. Louis at a time when the rest of the nation is leaving it behind. Barack Obama’s election as the first African American president represents not so much the triumph of race as the marginalization of race as a determinant of political behavior. Ironically, Obama may be initiating a new political dynamic in which blacks (and whites) are encouraged to frame their interests not along racial lines but along other dimensions, such as the environment. A big environmental push by the federal government to support green policies, such as more compact development, investment in public transit, and a massive program of energy retrofits would probably benefit the African American community more than any other. The St. Louis region could narrow the black-white divide by ignoring it. That would be progress.
1. The research for this article was funded by the MacArthur Foundation’s Building Resilient Regions (BRR) Project. For more on the idea of regional resilience go to the website of the BRR Network: brr.berkeley.edu. We would like to thank Scott Krummenacher for his work on an earlier draft and Terry Jones for helpful suggestions.


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Chapter 4  
“Civic Centers for Saint Louis:”  
Creating the Good Society

The second major planning report of the 1907 plan was the report proposing the creation of neighborhood civic centers. Unlike the Public Building Group report, this report was prepared expressly for the plan. The Civic Centers committee was chaired by the noted local reformer, Dwight Davis, and had several distinguished committee members, most notably, the renowned landscape architect, Henry Wright. While it is unclear who actually penned the report, the intellectual force behind the concept was undoubtedly Wright who became one of the major pioneers in urban and regional planning in the twentieth century. Of all the reports in the plan, it was the Wright-inspired report that may have been the most important because it established the foundation for urban planning in not just St. Louis, but for the United States, as well.

What the plan proposed was encouraging the development of civic centers throughout the city. Other cities had generated similar schemes, but what made the 1907 strategy so different was that it was not talking about “building” one or two community complexes run by the city. What the committee had in mind was not a particular institution but rather “facilitating” the “the grouping of various public, semi-public, and private institutions” that would enhance the “mental, moral, or physical improvements of the neighborhood.” These institutions or facilities could include such things as schools—both public and private, library branches, parks and playgrounds, model tenements (which would be private—this was after all, a generation before public housing in the United States), settlement houses (like Hull House in Chicago), churches, the facilities of athletic or social organizations, police stations, and fire houses.”

The committee saw all kinds of benefits resulting from their scheme. Small parks would reduce congestion, which would result in a lower death rate. Playgrounds would provide youth healthy alternatives to gang activities and hence lead to reduced juvenile crime. Increased open space would enhance fire protection. But the main objective of the civic centers was to foster social cohesion among the disparate ethnic and racial groups in the city. While the stereotypes used by the committee to describe these various groups make contemporary readers cringe, the ultimate goal of the committee was “to foster civic pride in the neighborhood” and to “develop a neighborhood feeling.” For American planners, this was an entirely new direction. Up until this time, planning was about ordering physical space for governmental purposes. What made Wright’s concept revolutionary was that it wanted to use planning—albeit of physical space—to transform the social make-up of the city so that Italians, Jews—even African-Americans—would see themselves as belonging to the same community and sharing the same identity.

But the committee went even further. Not only did they envision using physical planning to transform social life, they proposed planning private space for public reasons. One reason for this was that it was simply more economical. By building a school where there was already a church and a playground was simply taking advantage of what was already there—even if it was private space. Instead of addressing the needs of just one or two communities, the city could improve numerous communities by building a public bath in one neighborhood, a school in a second, and a park in a third. As the committee pointed out, this smart use of public resources “would center the interest of the people in the neighborhood and would enable the different institutions to supplement one another.” Although there is a considerable amount of opposition to this notion that government
has the right to tell individuals how to use their property (as the controversy over eminent domain would indicate), for members of the committee, the modern industrial city left the people with no choice. As they told St. Louisans, “the indiscriminate herding together of large masses of human beings ignorant of the simplest laws of sanitation, the evils of child labor, the corruption of political life, and above all, the weakening of the ties which bind together the home—these are dangers which strike at the very roots of society.” For them, there was only one conclusion. “To combat them the government must employ every resource in its power.”

How does one create the good society in the 21st century? Three authors provide three distinct approaches to the question. Patrick Sullivan writes that the use of physical space remains a hallmark of the good society. Private sector developers respond to market demands and preferences—which are always moving targets. Standards of construction and design are greatly influenced by what consumers are willing to buy. Once a set of standards has been developed, the people who developed them are not willing to readily change those standards. However, new groups emerge with new standards, and push the market forward (or, as the case may be, embrace ideas of long ago). Further, policy decisions tend to follow those standards and infrastructure develops around those market-driven choices. Sullivan correctly points out that public and private sectors are not always on the same page. While developers are attempting to be nimble and respond to changing market demands, government institutions can respond with thinking and processes that reflect the past more than the future. Success, according to Sullivan, lies in the ability to navigate and facilitate change rather than make futile attempts to stop it.

Susan Glassman shifts the focus from physical space to human activity, by examining the condition and treatment of children. The communities of tomorrow will be shaped by the children of today, and Glassman notes that large segments of children are not enjoying a quality of life that is preparing them well to be tomorrow’s leaders. She raises an important question—what would the region’s neighborhoods look like if children were the #1 priority? It’s a deeply thought-provoking question. Glassman examines several elements addressing the needs of children, from educational choices to mixed-income settings to creative funding opportunities. In the end, this thoughtful essay challenges the region to reconsider its investment in the youngest members of society—because there will be a day when those young citizens will be setting the region’s priorities.

Nikki Weinstein brings the concept to the electronic age, by linking effectively the pursuit of good lives with technology. Online communities pose both challenges and opportunities for traditional community settings. On the one hand, online communities bring together diverse forces that otherwise would not connect. The potential for action is huge—the motivation for engagement and participation is high among these connected professionals—and participants are willing to roll up their sleeves to make a difference. At the same time, there is the “digital divide” that separates those who are connected with those who are not. Connectivity in the region is not universal, across geography or generations. For those who are connected, technology can be a powerful tool to bridge many of the gaps in society. As a region, St. Louis is not fully utilizing the powerful tools before us, but there are organizations making an effort. Just as consumer preferences are a moving target, so are technology and its applications. It may well be that for the young people of the region, “community” will have a much broader definition than ever before.
If only people’s tastes wouldn’t change! It would be so much easier to market one’s product! No longer would buyers be a moving target. But alas, bell bottoms were in, and then they were out. Leisure suits were in, and then they were out. Neighborhood living in mostly squared-off blocks in a grid street pattern were in, then that design was out. And now it’s back in.

All of the changing opinions and moods of the consumer causes marketers and providers of services and products to change or go out of business. The “in” or “cool” (or other current word description for high popularity) item may quickly fade from the scene as the whims of the buying public decide—often in mysterious ways—that some alternative is now a more desirable choice as to what was just thought to be so perfect a few weeks or months before.

I have a “French Silk” colored car, according to the auto maker’s literature. Funny, but when I first looked at it, I thought it was tan. But “tan” no longer has the punch or pizzazz to help sell. A “tan” color description is so 1980s. But “French Silk”—now that’s one fine sounding, impressive color scheme!

As this applies to neighborhood design (where I find the fickle nature of consumers to be most fascinating), it has been during the past 80-something years of relatively modern-designed communities that we’ve seen home buyers opt almost continuously for more living space, more outdoor open space near them, gradually opting for curvilinear streets over straight ones, dead end cul-de-sacs for privacy over through streets, garages off their fronting street with no rear alley entrances for rear garages, smaller front porches with a shift toward fancier backyards with pools, barbeques and playgrounds.

But then come, the winds of change! Out with the new, in with the old! Next thing you know, grid street patterns with rear alleys start to gain again in popularity. Homes that have an exterior look of those designed in the 1920s to 1940s gain in appeal. Removing the driveway and garage entry from the home’s front elevation becomes very desirable. Smaller home sites and sometimes smaller homes become the preferred choice. Inclusion of “granny flats” or SROs (single room occupancy units) regain popularity. That means overall higher densities of homes-per-acre-of-land. These changes are captured as part of
the description for “neo-traditional” design or “new urban” design.

They often are touted with slogans such as “live, work, play” to connote that all the fun and exciting needs in one’s life can be achieved in a single community. They often are touted as “walkable communities” which similarly, indicate that you can often perform all of the tasks that you choose to perform without getting into your automobile—that you can walk to your neighborhood cleaners, neighborhood grocer, neighborhood gym and so on. These communities often cannot be spread out in low density designs and achieve these neo-traditional, walkable community characteristics.

So with all of this unpredictable change out there and established local government rules and restrictions, what’s the builder of a new home community to do? As buyer tastes change, one might logically expect that government rules and regulations which provide a framework for community design would change at the same time. Yet, there often is a lack of cadence. Such rules are established by those who have, by and large, lived in communities designed prior to currently changing consumer tastes. Most often, those individuals who have made the rules for a community are happy with their living choices—and they are happy with the rules that they’ve made for their city or county. So they often don’t grasp quickly nor warm up to the thought that consumer preferences might be rapidly evolving in ways that new life styles are preferred that differ from their own choices and preferences.

More often than not, density is the largest single issue and hardest to change. Most communities are very reluctant to adjust their rules to allow for increased densities even though that is exactly what the market—the actual buyers—are trying to tell us that they want as a part of their future life style. Those who have established the rules often are pleased with the rules they have set up and see no reason to change. In fact, they often seem to fear change. I have seen that fear sitting through dozens of public hearings for rezoning proposals before many local governmental bodies throughout the region. Particularly challenging—and I know this from nearly 30 years in the St. Louis regional housing industry—is any effort to increase the permissible density for new home communities. There is simply often a “gut feeling” that becomes evident by the present-day rule makers that “there goes the neighborhood” if they allow higher densities or smaller homes than what they, themselves, live in and on. And that is despite the evidence that often can be presented as to the changed desires of the buying public for higher densities.

Studies on the subject are few and far between. One of the best ever seen was performed in St. Louis in 1998 titled St. Louis Residential Land Use Study by McReynolds Appraisal Company. The study focused on nine areas within St. Louis County and St. Charles County where various sizes and densities of homes were built in close proximity to each other. That study measured the actual sales data for real properties. There was nothing hypothetical about it. It concluded, “there is no reason to expect the development of a ‘small lot’ subdivision or other high-density residential community to have a detrimental effect on the property values of existing nearby residences built on larger lots.” In fact, the study further concluded, “mixed-density residential developments including a range of lot sizes and house prices can be expected to enhance the values of existing nearby residential properties.”

Slowly, the St. Louis region has begun to accept some of the principles of neo-traditional design or new urbanism, with limited acceptance of higher densities. So, plans that have major elements of community design from 80 years ago are back in vogue. Will it last? Yes and no. Do consumer preferences ever stay the same permanently? No. Yet, what seems likely is that we are seeing a permanent, wider variety of preferences by various niches of the total market. Some will
be able to afford and prefer low density, open space life styles perhaps in more rural settings. But most will choose and can only afford a higher density life style with less open space. Some desire it. Some have no financial choice.

Higher densities too often carry a stigma left over from out-of-date stereotyping. Even though it no longer is with us, the one-time highly touted Pruitt-Igoe high rise, highly dense public housing in the city of St. Louis, eventually came to stand for everything that was wrong with high density housing. And yet, the nation has learned—slowly. For decades now, those kinds of high density neighborhoods are not what is planned and built when seeking greater densities. Rather, developers, builders and planners have learned in a way that can best be characterized by this quote from Denver architect David Jansen, “it’s not how dense you make it, it’s how you make it dense.” The meaning is that with proper designing to accommodate consumer preferences for nice amenities, trees, some open space and other state-of-the-art design characteristics, a higher density can be achieved in a way that will be an asset to the housing stock of any city or county and property values can hold up equal to any nearby lower density housing.

Consumers preferring the neo-traditional design may simply opt for rehabbed living in downtown St. Louis or other older suburban downtowns where much of the urban design considerations are already in place. Others opt for the same community design philosophy but in places such as New Town in the north end of the city of St. Charles, built in recent years on what had been flat farmland. It is far and away the most talked about neo-traditional new community in our region and likely will be studied for decades to come. The developers routinely host traveling planners and builders from throughout the country who come to see the community which was patterned after some of the nation’s first and most highly publicized new urbanism communities—Seaside near Destin FL (made further famous as the site for the shooting of the Jim Carey movie “Truman Show”) and Celebration, a Disney community adjacent to Disneyworld in Orlando, FL.

The important “take away” for all who try to peer into the future as to how we will reside in our neighborhoods of tomorrow is to recognize that consumer preferences are sure to change and most of these consumers have very definite limits as to how much they can afford. Those two considerations must trump all other considerations. And government needs to work with the developers, builders and architects of tomorrow’s communities in order to facilitate that change and not to obstruct
it. To attract the buyer of tomorrow to the neighborhoods they will desire, we must embrace the idea of rapid change and flexibility in our governing structure—the rules and regulations that allow for the creation of our neighborhoods of tomorrow cannot remain rigid and immovable, mired in the planning and thinking that often dates back 40 to 80 years ago.

Put another way, one of my favorite quotes on how to plan communities is from an early 1990s article in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* by renowned urban planners from the University of Southern California, Peter Gordon, Harry Richardson and Myung-Jin Jung, who wrote, “The appropriate role for planning agencies and local jurisdictions should be to facilitate...land assembly, to provide economic infrastructure, and to discourage growth control initiatives—in other words, help the market to work rather than attempt to strangle it.” That quote should become a mantra to be recited and practiced by every government planning office in the region. Sadly, too often, it seems that such jurisdictions and planning departments almost take a view that their role is to put the brakes on change and keep things as they have been. That might be fine if we could be assured that no one—now or in the future—will ever change the leading trends and desires of the buying public that have been in vogue in the past.

No one is able to post a notice to warn us of when change is about to happen. It just happens that, one day, someone realizes that more and more people are choosing something new and different than what used to be the case. Bright entrepreneurs then try to capitalize on that new demand, striving to succeed based on whether they are able to compete and give consumers the best combination of price and product to meet their wishes. Those businesses that can adapt and do that are the ones that succeed. Those that stay with their old ways are the ones often left behind as the winds of change sweep through the buying public.

Some people are incredibly good at seeing these changes coming. I am in awe of successful visionaries. It is particularly amazing to me that an early 1950 artist’s rendering carried in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, showed “new city planning” that included the artist’s depiction of the Gateway Arch along the city’s riverfront. I look at that rendering and just shake my head and say “wow!” Visionaries had the idea long before any broad-based community support would gather steam and eventually allow its construction. This “Gateway to the West” symbol of our city and region is now known around the world. Few cities anywhere have such a distinct, recognizable symbol. Yet the 1950 artwork, and
the idea which pre-dated it, did not become reality until the arch was built in the mid-1960s.

Another marvel that today is taken for granted is the 30-year effort to build a new bridge across the Missouri River between St. Charles and St. Louis Counties. In 1971, home builders in St. Charles County saw what was happening and met with then-district engineer for the Missouri Highway and Transportation Commission, Bill Trimm. Trimm gave them no hope for a new bridge. So the builders hired Fleishman Hillard and began a quest to get popular and political support for a new bridge. In the April 7, 1974, edition of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, a leading home builder in the region, the late John Wohldmann, wrote an opinion-editorial piece espousing the need for the bridge and saying that if everyone got behind the idea, a bridge from the extension of Page Avenue in St. Louis County could be open to traffic by 1984. Well, not everyone fell in line behind the idea and there were major funding issues. With continued persistence, a new 10-lane bridge often referred to as the “Page Avenue Bridge” opened to traffic officially on December 13, 2003. Without this bridge, St. Louis traffic would be incredibly more gridlocked at all hours of the day than we find today.

Big picture planning is such a major part of our region’s quality of life. Not only does it take visionaries, it takes visionaries who will be persistent and passionate. In my opinion, it remains a major loss for the St. Louis region that we did not vote to create Meramec Lake in 1978. There were definitely obstacles and challenges to build a dam safely that would have created the huge lake. The long-proposed project may have suffered its major blow two years earlier when the Teton Dam in Idaho failed. That dam was of the same kind that was to be built here. But had our region seen that project through, today St. Louis would have a water playground on its doorstep that would outshine not only the Lake of the Ozarks as a quality water recreational destination but also be superior to most every inland urban metropolitan area in the country when evaluating high quality water-based attractions. It would have added immensely to the region’s job base and economic wealth.

Today, we see visionary ideas such as Choteau’s Lake, the Bottle District development, the Ballpark Village development and the Gateway Arch grounds development. These proposals would help transform the St. Louis region into the world class city that it was a century ago.

We would all do well to cheer on the civic leaders who are promoting these ideas as they pull us onto the world stage as a true competitor for increased jobs and economic opportunity for all who do, and will, live here.

If we tie into that big picture the idea of also having a flexible regulatory framework for the design of tomorrow’s communities—in a manner that accommodates the preferences of tomorrow’s buyers—this region will re-emerge as it did at the time of what many consider its zenith, the 1904 World’s Fair. That nostalgic look backward does not have to be the all-time high point for this region.

Through proper community vision for major improvements and flexible, supportive decisions by local governments for community design, the best will be yet to come for this wonderful region that is the Gateway to the West.
Endnotes
Bibliography


About the Author

Pat Sullivan is the Executive Vice President of the Home Builders Association of St. Louis and Eastern Missouri. He has been with the HBA in various capacities since 1980.

While with the HBA, he has served on numerous local and regional boards, committees and task forces associated with a variety of local governments to represent the housing industry’s viewpoint on public policy issues.

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The HBA is a not-for-profit trade association whose members are businesses, which are involved in the home building industry. The HBA's basic mission is to help the private sector meet the housing demand for as many people as possible.
WHAT IS A GOOD COMMUNITY?
ONE IN WHICH CHILDREN MATTER MOST
Susan K. Glassman

INTRODUCTION
Illinois Action for Children defines itself as “a catalyst for strong families and powerful communities where children matter most.” If taken seriously, this is a powerful statement. A community that is concerned about its future economic competitiveness and desirability should evaluate its priorities and the success of its initiatives against the impact on children. Ultimately the future productivity, health, social and cultural values and civic orientation of today’s children are greater predictors of the future of a community…or a nation…. than other kinds of investments. If we fall behind on infrastructure investments today, we still have an opportunity to catch up by redoubling our efforts ten years hence. But if a child born today has inadequate education, health care and social support the impact of that will be felt, and paid for by the community, for some 70 years and with each passing year of the child’s life there is less possibility of making up for lost time.

With the exception of people whose childhoods were marred by dire poverty, brutal discrimination or abuse situations, most baby boomers believe that it was better to be a child when they themselves were children. This isn’t just sentimentality or nostalgia for the way things used to be. Neighborhoods, whether urban, suburban or rural, felt safer. This fact alone made a powerful difference to children because they could play outside with other children without their play being organized and supervised by adults. If you lived in a city, the kids on the block were likely to come from a variety of income and educational backgrounds and there were innate differences in size, speed, intelligence, imagination, and leadership. Everyone knew who was physically fast or mentally slow or a bit strange. Kids and adults also knew when there was trouble in someone’s house, whose mother was drinking too much, whose father had lost his job, which families were dealing with illness or death. But everyone played hide and seek, or stick ball, or hopscotch or jump rope. And as you got to be 10 or 11 years old, the sense of safety permitted growth in independence. If you lived in the suburbs you could jump on your bike and ride to a friend’s house a mile away. If you lived in the city you could hop on a bus or a train...
to go downtown for a movie or ice skating or window shopping. Even without the electronic tether of the mobile phone, as long as you showed up for dinner, no one worried.

School life was not too different from neighborhood life. There were brighter and less bright kids, kids for whom school was the end all and be all and kids who were just marking time. By high school it was clear who would be going to college and who would not, but not going didn’t spell personal tragedy. There were jobs in the trades and in manufacturing, jobs in the police and fire department. A high school diploma prepared a student adequately to enter training for those jobs. Except for the kids who were severely learning disabled, complete sociopaths or criminally inclined, there appeared to be a reasonable future for everyone. In fact, a common quip which had more than a grain of truth was that the students bound for the trades or factories might have a more secure economic future than those who were going to college to study humanities.

How profoundly the experience of growing up in America has changed! In the neighborhood, children’s lives are marked by profound isolation. Neighborhoods empty out during the day. Families that can afford it enroll their kids in structured programs and activities during after-school hours and in summer. Children whose families cannot afford these programs, or who have outgrown them, spend their time at home alone or with their siblings. Parents are afraid to have their children play outside unsupervised or to have other children that they don’t know spend time in their homes. The unstructured running, jumping, skating and ball playing that used to be a vehicle for physical activity and for social interaction are mostly gone from the landscape of childhood. In his 2007 book, Children at Play: An American History, Howard Chudakoff reports on a recent survey of the ways that children spend their discretionary time. Of the 51 non-school, non-work hours that kids, on average, had available to them each week, only about one-half hour was spent in unstructured outdoor activities. Adult-organized activities, such as sports leagues, which take up so much of pre-teen children’s time are single-interest and single age-range activities that do not give children the opportunity to explore ways of sharing space and building bonds with a community of peers. The popular Wii game system is a powerful metaphor for what has changed in American childhood, the children’s equivalent of “Bowling Alone.” Children (and adults) can use these systems to exercise and even play simulated team sports, alone, at home. For suburban children and children in affluent urban families, the void created by the disappearance of neighborhood and community
life is partially filled by organized sports and enrichment activities. At the extreme, children are rushed in car pools from soccer, to piano, to ballet, to tennis with barely a moment to breathe, much less to notice whether there are other kids to play with down the street. For many urban children there are no after school programs and no extra resources or available drivers to take them to enrichment or sports activities so, until their parents are no longer able to exert control over their whereabouts, they spend their non-school hours at home.

School life has also changed dramatically. For children who are on an upwardly mobile trajectory, whose parents are aware of the competitive global economy into which their children will come of age, school is a high stakes, no-nonsense business. Preparation for college entry begins in the cradle and culminates with a high pressure, carefully constructed high school career filled with advance placement classes and a dizzying mix of extra-curricular activities. “Community service” is a common feature of this type of middle and high school career, but since these students are striving for quantity of activities to demonstrate well-roundedness rather than depth of involvement, it is a rare kid that finds passion and meaning in this type of volunteer activity.

For low income children who are not on this trajectory into a meaningful and productive place in the global economy, school is often a holding pen which provides relative physical safety during the daytime hours but in no way prepares them for success as adults. For those who are not reading well by 3rd grade the script is pretty well-written—a high likelihood of dropping out of school, of being chronically unemployed and of serving time in prison. If a student is struggling in school, or if a student is bored by school, there is little motivation to stick with it. Everyone knows people who graduated from high school and whose subsequent work life has consisted of a series of low paid service jobs and of relentless financial struggle. It is virtually impossible to have a career without post-secondary education or training but even at a public college or community college or technical school, the financial cost is high and the payoff uncertain.

THE DATA HOW WELL ARE CHILDREN IN OUR REGION DOING

The data that appear below are derived from four sources: the Vision for Children at Risk “2007 Children of Metropolitan St. Louis Report to the Community;” the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s on-line “Kids Count” data report; the 2003 “American Community Survey;” and the 2000 US Census. Consider some indicators about the beginning of life for the region’s children:
Percent of all Births to Teenage Mothers

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<th>St. Louis City MO 2005</th>
<th>St. Louis County MO 2005</th>
<th>St. Charles County MO 2005</th>
<th>St. Clair County IL 2004</th>
<th>Madison County IL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of all Births</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to Teenage Mothers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of Births with No or Inadequate Pre-Natal Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National 2004</th>
<th>St. Louis City MO 2005</th>
<th>St. Louis County MO 2005</th>
<th>St. Charles County MO 2005</th>
<th>St. Clair County IL 2004</th>
<th>Madison County IL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Births with</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No or Inadequate Pre-N</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natal Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percent of Infants Born at Low Birth Weight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National 2004</th>
<th>St. Louis City MO 2005</th>
<th>St. Louis County MO 2005</th>
<th>St. Charles County MO 2005</th>
<th>St. Clair County IL 2004</th>
<th>Madison County IL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Infants</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born at Low Birth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expectant mothers throughout the region who are living in poverty are not receiving adequate pre-natal care. In none of the five metropolitan area counties for which the data were available was the national norm for pre-natal care reached, and in the City of St. Louis an alarming 18.9 percent of expectant women had no care or inadequate pre-natal care.

The data demonstrate the degree to which children of the St. Louis area are living in poverty and the extent to which that poverty is geographically concentrated within the region:

Selected Indicators and Predictors of Poverty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>St. Louis Metro Area (MO-IL)</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population under 18 living below</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population under 18 living below</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200% poverty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of children living in single parent</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>households</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population between 16 and 19 that</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has dropped out of high school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population between 16 and 19 not</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in school and not working</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of children living in high poverty</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neighborhoods (where 20% or more of population is below poverty)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

185
While almost one-third of the children in the St. Louis metropolitan area are living in families at or near poverty level, the region was doing better in this respect than the United States as a whole. It is interesting to note that St. Louis’s children living in poverty were significantly less concentrated in poor neighborhoods than were children throughout the nation.

Sources of Assistance to Reduce the Impact of Poverty upon Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent of children Living Below Poverty</th>
<th>Percent of Children Receiving TANF</th>
<th>Percent of Children Receiving Medicaid or S-CHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis City, MO</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis County, MO</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Charles County, MO</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Clair County, IL</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison County, IL</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(N.B. Nationally among children with incomes below poverty level, 61.5 percent received TANF in 1994 compared with 29.3 percent in 2003).

Childhood poverty in the St. Louis area is concentrated in St. Louis City and in St. Clair County. TANF is a dwindling resource due to the stricter self-sufficiency and eligibility requirements that have been imposed upon recipients. But, the fact that so many children remain in or near poverty suggests that the availability of living wage jobs, effective job training programs and child care subsidies is insufficient to support families in making the transition to self-sufficiency. The widespread availability of health care services through Medicaid and TANF is, relatively speaking, a bright spot for children living in or near poverty whether or not their parents are employed.

Universal access to public education has historically been the hallmark of opportunity and the gateway to upward mobility in this country. However, the resources available to local districts to educate children as well as their success in achieving desirable educational outcomes vary widely between counties and among districts within counties.
### Percent Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Price Lunch 2005-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>St. Louis City Public Schools</th>
<th>St. Louis County Public School Districts</th>
<th>St. Charles County Public School Districts</th>
<th>St. Clair County Public School Districts</th>
<th>Madison County Public School Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Students</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>15.8-82.7</td>
<td>9.7-33.2</td>
<td>16.1-96.4</td>
<td>14.5-79.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Average Expenditure Per Pupil, 2005-6


### Student Mobility Rate 2005-6

|                        | 76.8 %                        | 3.9-81.9%                                | 8.7-26.4 %                                 | 9.4-39.2 %                               | 6.6-28.3%                              |

### Drop-out Rate 2005-6

|                        | 18.7%                         | 0.8-19.9%                                | 1.6-4.1%                                   | 0.0-7.8%                                 | 0.9-5.8%                               |

### Four Year Graduation Rate 2005-6

|                        | 55.7%                         | 67.4-97.2%                               | 87.4-88.6%                                 | 58.8-99.8%                               | 77.4-97.7%                             |

### WHAT IS A GOOD COMMUNITY FOR CHILDREN

A community that is good for children is one which is safe and healthy and one which provides for the best possible opportunity for virtually all children to reach their full potential. Children are raised and molded in families, in the schools that they attend and in their communities. Many urban and educational reform efforts attempt to focus upon one of the factors without addressing the others, but for the child who is at the epicenter of these efforts, the three realms which compose their lives are inextricable.

There have been many valiant efforts nationally and locally to achieve improved outcomes for families and children by addressing one side of the family-school-community triangle. Welfare reform, the effort on the part of the federal and state governments to “end welfare as we know it” was rooted in two complementary political and social values. The first was the virtually universal disgust that Americans felt for the welfare system and the second was the deeply held value that work is transformative and has the ability to stabilize families. So parents were pushed off welfare with the expectation that they leave home every morning and go to work and that this would provide a salutary model of discipline and self-sufficiency for their children. As New York Times reporter Jason DeParle documented in his book, American Dream: Three Women, Ten Kids and a Nation’s Drive to End Welfare as We Know It, former welfare recipients did in fact go to work in droves, typically at low wage jobs and often without benefits and during the least desirable shifts. There has never been enough support for high quality childcare or for after school programs, nor have these entry level and poorly educated workers been able to earn enough to provide these “extras” for their children.
So the result has been that most children of low income working parents are left unsupervised in dangerous neighborhoods or in the care of untrained friends, neighbors or relatives. The working poor are not alone in this dilemma. Most middle class working parents cannot afford the unsubsidized cost of high quality early childhood education, after school and summer programs and most do not feel secure about the safety of their neighborhoods so the children are often confined to home in the after-school hours. It is a well-known workplace phenomenon that the phone lines are tied up and productivity plummets from 3:00 until 3:30 while parents anxiously await and finally receive a phone call from their kids saying that they have arrived safely at home.4

School is the second side of the triangle that defines a child’s life. In the past decade there has been unprecedented national anguish over failing schools and the “achievement gap” between low income minority students and their middle class majority peers. There are several common themes that underlie this concern. The first is that individual students who are not being well served by the education system face a bleak personal future of marginal employment and low wages. Another is that struggling schools in many core cities and inner suburbs, including, quite starkly, those of the St. Louis area, are a powerful factor in urban sprawl and the emptying out of cities and a barrier to economic development. And a third is the concern that educational standards and levels of achievement, especially in science and mathematics, threaten to make the next generation of American workers less innovative and productive than those of the nations against which we will compete.5

These widely held and well-documented problems in education have given rise to school reform efforts around the country. Some of these are school district wide reforms that measure their success against the frequent testing of students that is mandated by the “No Child Left Behind” legislation that was passed during the administration of President George W. Bush. However, given the enormous inertia and pushback by key stakeholders of large urban districts, the most successful efforts have involved individual schools whose educational leaders have been given, or have seized, the authority to control hiring and firing of teachers, budgets, curriculum, hours of instruction and school climate.6 Many of these school reform projects are charter schools which draw students from a wide geographical area. In some cases the charters under which these schools operate actually mandate a lottery system which prevents giving priority to children in the neighborhood of the school. These schools have had mixed
results. Some have not shown any better results than the urban public school districts in whose geographic jurisdiction they are located and others (e.g. the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) started by alumni of Teach for America), have seen the herculean efforts of their educational leadership rewarded with improved academic performance. But these schools typically miss out on the power of community to reinforce and support the achievement of students.

The Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ) is a well regarded comprehensive effort to improve outcomes for children in a 97 block area of upper Manhattan that has been marked by low student achievement and all of the other problems for children that are characteristic of an impoverished minority community. The inspirational founder and leader of HCZ, Geoffrey Canada, having observed the scattershot and diffuse nature of many interventions aimed at helping children in poverty, has put into place an integrated system of supports for children that include “Baby College” to teach expectant and new parents the importance of nurturing their children’s cognitive and socio-emotional development, early childhood and pre-school programs, an elementary and a middle school, and extensive non-school hours programs for kids within the HCZ. In Paul Tough’s book about HCZ and Canada, *Whatever it Takes*, Canada is quoted as saying that his goal is to get most of the kids in a geographic area on board because “each child would do better if all of the children around him were doing better.”

Canada is doing this work in a New York City neighborhood in which (notwithstanding recent indicators that suggest increased income and racial integration in parts of Harlem) many children live in families marked by instability and financial insecurity, including housing insecurity. He has decided to focus on children to prepare them to “grow into fully functioning participants in mainstream American middle-class life” and he is doing this by emulating in the lives of the Harlem children the cognitive and social experiences with which many middle class children are provided by their families. He works to engage parents through the Baby College and other parent education vehicles. The depth, comprehensiveness and nimbleness of Canada’s program are awe-inspiring and he is demonstrating impressive results, especially when he is able to intervene very, very early, ideally shortly after conception, in the lives of children. His work has captured the attention and the imagination of people who are looking for models that work. During the Presidential campaign of 2008, Barack Obama spoke of his interest in supporting the creation of a number of children’s zones in distressed core cities around the country.

**HOW CAN ST. LOUIS PLAN FOR COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THE WELL BEING OF CHILDREN IS THE HIGHEST PRIORITY**

Canada’s vision is to change the life trajectory of thousands of children. He does this by accepting the community that the children live in more or less as he found it and insulating the children from negative influences of their neighborhood and their peers until he has achieved a critical mass of high achieving children who will expect to do well because all of the children around them are doing well. In planning for St. Louis communities of the future, in which the well-being of children is the highest priority, I would return to the premise that we should develop all three sides of the triangle—family, school and community—in which children are nurtured. If St. Louis is going to value the 35% of its children who are living at or near poverty, we will need to create neighborhoods that strengthen families and support children.

The vision that informed the HOPE VI community revitalization model is perhaps what comes closest to the types of communities that we should be striving for, mixed income
communities that provide a safe, stable and attractive environment for all of the families that reside in them. While the research on whether the actual social integration of families occurs shows mixed results, there are several outcomes for families that are indisputable. One is that the physical and mental health of parents and children are improved from living in a safer, cleaner, better maintained environment. Another is that low income children and families benefit when one major cause of instability and insecurity—housing insecurity—is removed. And a third is that children’s engagement in the academic and social life of their schools improves when school mobility, which is often caused by housing insecurity, diminishes.

The well planned and managed mixed income community has the potential to strengthen and stabilize low income families. Many HOPE VI communities have standards for initial occupancy of apartments and for continuing occupancy. These standards are typically developed by a Re-occupancy Committee that includes resident leaders, in addition to representatives of the development and property management team. The standards may require the heads of household of subsidized units to be working or to be in an education or training program that will lead to work. They almost always require that the family work with the HOPE VI Community and Supportive Services provider to make progress toward the goals of an Individual and Family Development Plan. HOPE VI communities often have an on-site, staffed computer lab where adults can improve their skills, work toward a GED if they lack a high school diploma and receive assistance with resume writing and job searches. And the mixed income nature of the communities means that there is a culture of work, so your next door neighbor is going off to work every day and the parent of your child’s playmate knows that the local hospital is hiring entry level workers.

The centerpiece of the planned mixed income community is a school that is more than a school, it is a learning campus that embodies the aspirations that the community has for its children. It is, at a minimum, an early childhood through 8th grade school but it is also an education, culture and recreation center where older kids and adults can learn and participate in arts, fitness and sports programs. In a word, it is for kids both a school and a safe and nurturing community where the adults know and are invested in the children and their families for the first fourteen years of their lives and beyond.

It is of paramount importance and significance that the learning center include an early childhood development center for children from birth until age five. It is a tragic anachronism of our society that the public’s interest in and support for the education of children typically begins at age 5, while the period of most rapid brain development occurs before age 3. The ideal notion of young children cared for at home by their mothers is equally anachronistic when two-thirds of the mothers of pre-school children are in the workforce. The “achievement gap,” which is so difficult to overcome by the time a low income child reaches 4th grade without being able to read well, can be largely prevented with good, developmentally appropriate early childhood development programming which is coordinated with the education of parents about what their children need in the home environment to achieve their potential. Language development is the most critical domain of high quality early childhood programs and home environments that prepare children for success in reading, in school and in life. Longitudinal studies of language development in children from varying socio-economic backgrounds have observed differences in size of vocabulary beginning at age 2. At 30 months the vocabularies of poor children were half the size of those of children from professional families and the gap grew wider with age. During the next six months, leading up to the 3rd birthday, the vocabularies of poor children grew at about half the rate of those from professional families. By age 3, however, a wide gulf has opened in the number of words that
children from low income v. middle income v. affluent homes know. Researchers have also pointed out areas of social and behavioral development that place children from low income backgrounds at a disadvantage in school and beyond. These include socio-emotional skills, perseverance, attention, motivation and self-confidence. Furthermore, a high quality early childhood program can detect health and mental health problems and vastly increase the likelihood that the child will receive the care that will allow him to begin kindergarten ready to learn.

The cost of high quality early childhood development programs is high; only the truly affluent can afford to pay for it without some assistance. To the extent that we believe that good communities ought to provide a level educational playing field for young children whether or not their parents are well-off, early childhood education is clearly the place to start. A number of researchers, most notably the Noble Prize winning economist James Heckman, have demonstrated that, social equity aside, investment in early childhood development yields a far higher benefit than later interventions with respect to completion of high school, reducing crime, improving workforce productivity and reducing teen pregnancy. Given the high cost of providing quality early education for all, St. Louis advocates for children and for the future competitiveness of our communities will have to look to state and federal governments and to philanthropy to provide the resources that are needed. The Missouri portion of our region faces a particularly steep climb. While in recent years a number of states have begun providing universal pre-K programs for 4 year olds, Missouri is not among them. According to a 2007 report by the National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies, Missouri ranks 50th among the 50 states with respect to the percent of poverty -106%-at which it cuts off the state child care subsidy. In Missouri in 2008, a single parent with two children found that her childcare subsidy began to diminish when her annual income reached $11,316 and dropped to zero when her income reached $22,620. The state spent only $137.60 per week for full day infant care and $80.35 per week for pre-school care for these children, about a third of the full cost of care in a high quality early childhood development center. Moreover, Missouri spends just $12.6 million in pre-kindergarten education, reaching only 4,972 children, in contrast with Illinois which spends $283 million and is reaching 85,186 children. To build good communities for children and families, it will be necessary to convince policy makers of the critical importance of providing sufficient Head Start, Early Head Start and state support so that high quality education for children 0-5 will be
available for all children. It is clear that the philanthropic and business communities will also have an important role to play in supporting the development of innovative approaches and ensuring that high quality early education is available to all children.

Good communities for school age children will have good schools with strong educational leaders empowered to hire good teachers who will share create a high achieving school culture. They will have a “no excuses” approach to teaching all children, meaning that with or without the kind of parental support and home environment that is optimal, they will work tirelessly so that all children will learn. Whether the school is a public school or a charter school, the school will need the support and involvement of a community board consisting of parents and other residents, business and community leaders and other stakeholders. The job of this board will be to identify resources to make the school plant and program exceptional and, most importantly, to advocate for the school’s continued existence and relative autonomy in the face of shifts in policy and personnel at the district level and the state level. The school will have longer hours than traditional schools and will have summer and even weekend programs so that it can offer additional hours of academic instruction as well as exposure to arts and sports and social activities to the children and families of the mixed-income community.

As is the case with early childhood education, the idea that post high school education and training is the concern of the individual and the family is anachronistic and results in a tragic waste of talent. The community’s interest in preparing its youth for productive adulthood cannot end with high school. The future of the St. Louis community depends upon having a high percentage of adults who have completed post-secondary education so that we can compete for green and other emerging industries that offer high paying jobs. In general, the population of St. Louis is less well educated that the nation as a whole. Twenty-one and four tenths (21.4) percent of the adult population in St. Louis holds a bachelor’s degree compared with the national average of 27 percent. Nationwide the current generation of adults is the first since World War II, and perhaps the first in our history, to be less well educated than the preceding generation. This phenomenon is not equally distributed among all groups. While white and Asian adults between the ages of 25 and 29 are more likely to have a college degree than those over 30, African- American and Latino adults between 25 and 29 are less likely to have degrees than those over 30. While growing numbers of students in this country enroll in college, most of them never graduate. With large numbers working full time to pay for college and a lack of institutional support for struggling students, only about 25 percent of low-income students earn any kind of post-secondary degree. The rate for black and Latino students is about 20 percent. The economic recession that began in 2008 is making this situation particularly alarming as state governments, including Missouri and Illinois, face decreased revenues and cut back on support for publicly supported four year institutions and community colleges. These institutions are then forced to raise their fees making college even less affordable to students from low income families. Historically, one of the finest and most enviable characteristics of the U.S education system is that it has given second chances to its youth. Unlike the schools in many developed nations, our children have not been tracked at age eleven as college-bound or non-college bound. Late academic bloomers have had the opportunity to begin a post-secondary education at a community college, to matriculate, after earning an Associate’s degree, at a four year college and to progress to careers or graduate education. But the economics of pursuing post-secondary education for those whose families are financially unable to support them and pay their tuition is putting the achievement of a college degree out of reach for many of our youth.

Planning for a prosperous future for St. Louis means that the well-being of children and
youth must be our highest value. This will entail a major re-ordering of our priorities so that all children are given the tools and opportunities to reach their potential. There are models that our region should study and adapt. In Miami/Dade County, for example, The Children's Trust is an early intervention and prevention fund which serves all children while providing extra support for those who need it most. In Miami/Dade County with a highly diverse population of 2.4 million, comparable to the population of the St. Louis region, voters first passed a property tax to support the Children’s Trust in 2002. In 2008 it was reauthorized by an 86% favorable vote. The Children’s Trust invests $100 million per year in high quality programs and initiatives for children in health, development, safety, parental and community responsibility. Early childhood development and after school and summer programs are a very high priority. To become a good community for children, the St. Louis region must make a similar investment that suits local needs and priorities. To do any less is to yield our reputation as an innovative and compassionate community and our competitive edge in a global economy.
Endnotes

8. Tough 4.
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About the Author

Susan K. Glassman is Executive Vice President of Urban Strategies, a not-for-profit corporation that works with its development partner, McCormack Baron Salazar to rebuild distressed urban core communities into vibrant, safe residential neighborhoods with good schools, strong institutions, and a range of human service supports and amenities. Ms. Glassman is responsible for leadership and technical assistance in comprehensive community development efforts that connect human services, neighborhood school enhancements and economic development support to the physical redevelopment of communities. Ms. Glassman also oversees Urban Strategies’ corporate training and communications programs, both internal and external.

Prior to joining Urban Strategies, Ms. Glassman was Chief Executive Officer of the American Lung Association of Eastern Missouri responsible for directing all activities and increasing the revenue by 43%. Her strong management background includes leadership positions with the City of University City, Missouri where she earned national recognition for innovative programs to encourage development, rehabilitation and continuing racial and economic diversity. Ms. Glassman has held lecturer positions at Eastern Michigan University, Hong Kong Baptist College and Taiwan National University.

Ms. Glassman is the Board President of St. Louis Artworks. She serves on the Board of Trustees of the University City, Missouri Public Library and the Grant Allocations Committee of the Incarnate Word Foundation.

Ms. Glassman earned an M.A. in Urban Affairs from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri; an M.A. in English from the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor; and a B.A. in English and Social Science from City College of New York.
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF NEW MILLENNIALS: NEIGHBORHOODS AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

Nikki Weinstein

“Now along come the 76 million members of Generation Y. For these new 20-something workers, the line between work and home doesn’t really exist. They just want to spend their time in meaningful and useful ways, no matter where they are.”

Remember the days of sitting on the front porch and watching the life of the neighborhood happen before your very eyes? The days of knowing all the kids on the block, who they belonged to and what their parents did for a living? Not only was there no Internet and video games, they were days before blogging, before Facebook, before RSS feeds. The rapidly changing technological era we live in has affected how we interact with each other. In turn, it has naturally had an effect on how we interact as a community. What is changing and for whom? How does the next generation think about community? With the increasing participation in online communities, do young professionals define their community by where they live at all? How has this affected the strength of neighborhoods in the St. Louis region?

As communities struggle to engage neighbors to improve their area, how do they tap into the time, energy, and creativity of next generation leaders?

DEFINING COMMUNITY

As St. Louisans, we identify ourselves strongly with our local community. Just as we like our government close—as signified by the more than 90 municipalities in St. Louis County and the 28 alderman representing city dwellers—we take pride in our most local of locales—our neighborhoods. Neighborhood bars and restaurants abound, and, if they can acquire a crowd of local regulars, they thrive. We care about our neighborhood schools and our high school sports. Some might find all of this parochial, but for St. Louisans it’s about a sense of home, belonging, and community.

The definition of “community” has long been explored and debated. It is not as simple as one might think. Definitions include identification by locality or geographic place, such as
a neighborhood, city, or even region. For some, creating a sense of “community” within this geographic boundary means adding the social component of connection with the people in that geographically defined space.

Others may think of community as a shared interest, activity, or religion, such as a church or school “community” or an association or club. This definition emphasizes the common bond of the members. A third definition of community is by identity or demographic characteristic, such as the African American “community” or the Jewish “community.”

Different individuals identify more strongly with different communities and this usually changes over time. A 2003 ethnographic study conducted by the U.S. Census found that among minority GenX members, family was seen as the most important social institution and represented the most stable sense of community. Further, our modern world of increased mobility naturally decreases the strength and importance of geographic community. Interestingly, in the blogging world there is also an ongoing discussion about how to define both “community” and “online community.”

The traditional definitions of community are changing as baby boomers age and Gen Y-ers struggle to find their own place in the community. Many of the younger generations have met the need for community relationships through an online community. As early as the mid-80s, people have been engaging in online communication through virtual communities. A virtual, or online, community is a group of people who communicate via the Internet through chat rooms or forums. Often these communities exist around a common interest, a desire to expand social or professional networks, or for the purpose of gaining knowledge about a certain topic. People who interact in these online communities often never meet each other face-to-face. Members of online communities can develop their “character” there through the way they represent themselves, which may or may not be accurate or consistent with their real life personas.

Social networking sites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, take virtual communities to a new level. Called social networking sites, they allow members to post information about themselves, share family and vacation photos, and announces changes in their lives. These sites allow users to select who is in their “social” network. This personalizes the experience, as compared to the chat rooms of older technology that were open to any stranger. It also allows for people to meet new people through existing connections, allowing for someone to expand their network. Some, like LinkedIn, are aimed more towards professional development with opportunities to seek out or provide, via the site, a “recommendation” or reference. Begun on college campuses, Facebook has penetrated the lives of most people in their 20s and 30s. These web sites can also be accessed from your cell phone, keeping one “connected” even away from the hard drive. Some have described these social networking sites as “addictive” given the ease with which large amounts of time can be spent reading about other people and updating their own information. Facebook and similar applications also bridge the online world and the real world. No longer is communication restricted to the Internet for these community users. Now they use online communication to facilitate face-to-face interaction. This is a significant difference from the previous generation of online community participation.

Most media sources, like the Post-Dispatch and KWMU locally, have online communities. These are places for their readers and listeners to respond to articles, promote events, and often to rant their opinions in a public forum. Some online communities are solely dedicated to ranting about everything from political opinions to viewpoints on best parenting practices. Nonprofit organizations often have online communities accessed through their web sites. Again, these offer a
medium for those with common interests to connect virtually.

**A NEW DIGITAL DIVIDE**

As younger generations engage more and more in this type of online communication, the term “digital divide” takes on a new meaning. Historically, “digital divide” refers to the gap between people who have access to technology and those who do not. Traditionally, this gap exists because of economic disparities with low-income families being unable to afford a computer in the home or with schools in low-income areas being technologically unequipped. These days some private schools actually require each student to carry a laptop daily, while at the other extreme, some public school districts still do not have computers in every room. A 2004 study by the U.S. Department of Commerce revealed that 38.2 percent of U.S. households don't have computers and 45.4 percent of U.S. households don't have Internet access. The study also found that 41.3 percent of the total U.S. population does not use the Internet from any location.4

Some of those interviewed expressed the opinion that this digital divide is still a primary roadblock in connecting residents with neighborhood activity. Efforts have been made to close the gap between rich and poor when it comes to computer access. Public libraries offer Internet access for community members. There are countless grants that bring technological resources to the classroom. Organizations, such as ByteWorks, train youth on computer and Internet use and then send them home with their own computer after completing a set of courses. Programs like Computer Village and Web Innovations and Technology Services teach youth about hardware and networking by rebuilding old computers which might otherwise end up in a landfill.

In addition to the economic digital divide, there is also clearly a generation gap in how we use and understand the technology available to us to communicate. The average age of a blogger is surprisingly high, in the mid-30 age range, which is still much younger than the national average age of 44.5 How many over the age of 50, though, know how to “twitter?” When was the last time someone over 40 made weekend plans without talking to a friend on the phone—done completely over Facebook and text messaging? These are just a few of the ways technology is changing the way people communicate. Like most technological changes, the first to catch on are the younger generation.

In fact, Gen Y, defined here as those born between 1985 and 1995, grew up connected. A 2007 study of college students shows that 97 percent own a computer, 76 percent use instant messaging and 75 percent have a Facebook account.6 They are
the first generation to grow up immersed in a digital driven world. They have no memory of the pre-Internet era.

More than one-third of respondents to a Pew Internet and American Life Project survey said that they have used the Internet to connect with someone in a generation other than their own. So, while it seems ironic, there is hope that Internet use can actually bridge this generational digital divide.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS’ NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A staple of the St. Louis region’s civic life is participation in neighborhood associations. Again, because St. Louisans seem to like their decision making close to home, many organizations exist at the most local level. These organizations include subdivision trustee groups, municipal boards and committees, housing development corporation boards, block unity, and neighborhood associations. They exist to address social and economic issues such as crime, beautification, and business development. Many of these groups struggle for membership, generally attracting older, established homeowners to their ranks.

Young professionals want to be civic leaders. A census survey revealed that 85% of Generation X respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I would like to be more involved in the community.” However, many do not want to be involved in a traditional sense. Style matters in the civic engagement of the next generation. Since they tend overall toward big picture thinking and taking action, efforts to engage them must reflect this. Gen X/Y won’t put up with sitting in meeting after meeting and brainstorming and action planning. They want to do. They want their creativity and high-tech skills to be put to good use. They aren’t afraid of rolling up their sleeves and getting dirty in the process. On Meet Up St. Louis, a popular online networking site, one of the most popular groups is a volunteer group. People want to be involved. They want to be connected in an active, hands-on way.

In response to this desire, young professional groups are springing up all over the place. Just about every major St. Louis cultural institution has one (Young Friends of the Science Center, St. Louis Art Museum Young Friends, the Young Literati, etc.). Many nonprofits, from large organizations like the United Way to smaller organizations like Family Resource Center, have caught on and established young friends boards as they attempt to groom the next generation of charitable givers.
Several key factors influence the civic involvement of young professionals. First, like all of us, they want to know the WIIFM or “What’s in it for me?” In addition to intrinsic motivation for doing good, they are at a point in their lives and careers where they are seeking advancement. A professional advantage, such as networking opportunities or encouragement from their boss, encourages their civic participation. For example, one young professional interviewed stated that while many organizations have asked him to be involved, he joined the young friends board of a particular non-profit because, in addition to supporting the mission of the organization, another member of that group is a potential client.

Second, young professionals want to have a voice in the community. This is heard over and over among young professional leaders. They want a seat at the grown-up table. They want their opinion to be asked and counted. This is a struggle for many communities with established and powerful leadership. St. Louis, like many cities, has a history of making closed door decisions and having established “power brokers” that get things done. In order to effectively engage young professionals in the civic life of the region, this needs to be addressed. An expansion of power and decision making ability makes a real difference to young professionals.

Finally, while it sounds basic, young professionals need to be asked to participate. They do not know how to become involved due to their youth and inexperience. Of those interviewed who were civically engaged in their neighborhood, almost all of them said it was because someone suggested they get involved with a particular committee or planning an event. Young professionals need this guidance. Another way it can be provided is through mentoring. Young professional organizations as well as neighborhood groups should examine the feasibility of a mentoring program, formal or informal, to give young professionals a chance to network and learn from established leadership.

BRIDGING VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES AND GEOGRAPHIC ONES

Neighborhoods must start responding to this changing definition of community and the way in which the younger generation views their community. It is not to the advantage of the neighborhoods to ignore the technological changes happening around them. Rather, there is strong and creative potential for strengthening neighborhood involvement if they embrace the change and learn how to function within it. The Internet can actually serve as a tool to increase engagement among the younger demographic. More and more, young people are engaging first in online communities that lead to face-to-face meeting and activity. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 84 percent of Internet users have connected with some kind of a group. These groups are often online communities of people who share beliefs, hobbies, passions or lifestyles. They create a world-wide community that is not at all place based. Yet, 26 percent of Americans also use the Internet to strengthen their local ties and connections by planning community and church events, organizing recreational leagues, and coordinating charitable activities. The bridge between online and face-to-face contact is evident in how Facebook was founded. It began as an interactive online student directory at Harvard in 2004. It didn’t create an online community, but rather brought an offline community to the Internet in order to enrich and increase relationships and communications. Similarly, neighborhood associations can now utilize Facebook, and other online community tools, to enhance experiences offline.

Online communities do not inherently take away from the power and strength of physical
communities. Rather, they can be a tool for organizing neighbors; keeping people informed and leading to richer engagement. There are many web sites seeking to link physical communities with virtual communities. However, they are largely unutilized by the St. Louis region’s neighborhoods. Geographic communities can connect through online communication. This is the next step in bridging online and face-to-face interaction. Tools like i-neighbors and eNeighbors are available to assist. According to their web site, i-neighbors, for example, “helps individuals, communities, and homeowner’s associations build social capital by providing a place for neighbors to find each other, organize, share information and work together to address local problems.” I-neighbors allows for creation of neighborhood email lists, posting events, and even sharing pictures from those events.

Yet, St. Louis neighborhoods are not using these tools, and just minimally using other online neighborhood resources. Some neighborhoods have list-serves, which are email lists set up for easier email communication. Some blocks, buildings, or other subset of a neighborhood have groups on Facebook or similar social networking tools. So, on the one hand, these online resources are a very underutilized tool for our region. On the other hand, there is great potential for social online networking tools to enhance face-to-face interaction here. With 35% of all Internet users nationwide going online for news about their local community or community events, there is clearly a need to better utilize online communication to inform and engage residents. Greater utilization of such tools can only build social capital and improve the quality of life for neighbors.

Steps are being taken, though slowly, in the broader sense to engage younger leaders in civic activity. Cultural institutions and nonprofits, such as FOCUS St. Louis, the Contemporary Art Museum, and the Missouri Historical Society, are now, five years after Facebook began, beginning to utilize social networking sites to create groups for overall communications, promotions, and marketing. One hopes that neighborhood groups will not be far behind.

EXAMPLE—YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ASSIST NEIGHBORHOODS: FUEL

Based on the idea that city neighborhood and community groups play an important role in the vitality of the entire region, FUEL aims to mobilize volunteers to help support those organizations’ efforts. With a volunteer list of about 3,000, most are young professionals between the ages of 23 and 42. They do one-day volunteer projects side by side with neighborhood association members or with other neighborhood-based groups. This recognizes that such groups do not have enough engaged members and certainly are not well staffed. FUEL props up these groups with their manpower.

To engage young professionals in such a civic venture, the WIIFM (what’s in it for me) question must be satisfied. FUEL recognizes that and offers networking and social opportunities for members in addition to the volunteer activities. They hold monthly happy hour planning meetings and fun outings such as an annual wine trip. Even the locations of their happy hours reflect their mission of supporting neighborhoods as they utilize the locally owned neighborhood pub for their meetings. Further recognizing the financial position of young adults perhaps volunteering for the first time, FUEL membership is paid for in sweat equity. There is no charge to join except for the commitment to volunteer at least three times per year with the group.

FUEL successfully utilizes social networking sites including Facebook and MySpace to promote their group and events. With 56 Facebook members and more than 750 MySpace members, online networking has assisted FUEL with expanding their efforts and appeal. Many members have increased their civic engagement with a particular organization after
volunteering for a one-day FUEL event. Interestingly, though, many FUEL members are not active participants in their own neighborhoods. As one FUEL member interviewed stated, “It has to do with the image of neighborhood associations and block captains.” He sees this as a role for older members of the community, not for himself.

EXAMPLE—MILLENNIALS ORGANIZE THRU SOCIAL NETWORKING: WE CAN COALITION

Social networking sites, such as Facebook, can be effective grassroots organizing tools. In spring 2008, Missouri was threatened by an outside interests’ attempt to amend the Missouri constitution to ban affirmative action via ballot initiative. A group, dubbed the WE CAN coalition, mobilized quickly to combat this effort. On a Tuesday in April, leaders of the coalition heard that the key player in the opposing group would be visiting Kirksville, Missouri that Thursday. WE CAN members knew little else about this event. However, they did know that there were not one, but two Facebook groups dedicated to preserving affirmative action in Missouri.

A leader of WE CAN looked to those groups for help. Identifying members of the Facebook group who lived in Kirksville, she contacted them via Facebook messages asking what they might know. Members immediately responded. It was clear that the Facebook users in Kirksville were college students. Older WE CAN coalition members were able to train and mentor them from afar. WE CAN leaders were able to organize a counter protest with more than 100 people in attendance in just two days. Clearly, then, Facebook can be a tool to meet and mobilize those with common interests. This is an example of what could be done more at the neighborhood level.

EXAMPLE—CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF YOUNG PROFESSIONALS: CONNECT WITH…

Connect With…, the St. Louis Young Professionals Collaborative, an initiative of FOCUS St. Louis, is an opportunity for young professional organizations to exchange ideas, share trainings, coordinate calendars, and to recruit new members by promoting each other’s organizations and activities. Connect With… started in 2006 when Scott Lapp, a young professional community leader, suggested and assisted FOCUS in convening a few organizations to address concerns about planning major events at the same time and just to see how the groups might want to work together more in the future. What came out of it was about 25 organizations participating in "Lou’ It Up!" which was a two week and two day long push for getting young people involved in the region by all the organizations holding events in the same month and cross promoting them. The group decided to continue to meet for quarterly trainings and to work on getting a common web based calendar. The group also decided to have a bigger and better "Lou’ It Up!" the following year, which was re-named “Connect With…” Connect With… was held as a month long effort in October 2007 and again in October 2008. Since its inception, the St. Louis Young Professionals Collaborative has grown from five organizations holding a round-table discussion, to more than 40 member organizations. The group has two primary goals which represent a unique collaborative effort for the St. Louis region. The goals are:
1. To engage young professionals across the region who are not currently connected to the civic community through involvement with a member organization.

2. To strengthen organizations that serve young professionals in the St. Louis region through networking and training opportunities.

Connect With… is based on the premise that engaged young people will have more commitment and attachment to the region and thus be less likely to move to other cities.
Endnotes

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Bibliography


About the Author

Nikki Weinstein is the Director of Policy and Community Engagement at FOCUS St. Louis. Her career of in nonprofits working on community engagement and development programs shows a strong commitment to social and economic justice. She has extensive experience in facilitation of community meetings, strategic planning sessions, task force work, and is a certified mediator. She has created and conducted trainings and workshops for community residents, volunteers, and other professionals. An effective collaborator and negotiator, she has worked extensively with diverse communities and is skilled at building relationships with all segments of those communities.

Her current work at FOCUS St. Louis includes implementing policy research report recommendations on the issues of workforce housing and immigrant education. This has led to successful lobbying efforts to preserve higher education opportunities for all immigrant students. She has also created a roundtable of community organizations supporting the educational outcomes of immigrant students in the region. She oversees the implementation of a three year public education campaign on workforce housing and is working to establish a sustainable workforce housing policy coalition.

Ms. Weinstein’s Community Engagement portfolio at FOCUS includes establishment and facilitation of the St. Louis Young Professionals Collaborative made up of more than 40 organizations in the region. She also implements a regional dialogue program this year focusing on the intersection between affordable housing, public transportation and jobs.

Prior to joining FOCUS St. Louis, she worked for the Family Resource Center. She developed and implemented mentoring programs for youth. Her oversight of the projects included budget management, staff supervision, and volunteer training. Prior to her work at the Family Resource Center, she worked at the St. Louis Neighborhood Network under a grant to promote a community approach to keeping children safe, strengthening families, and building communities. She implemented and coordinated projects that included a wide variety of stakeholders including residents, social service providers, churches, and businesses. Her international experience includes a summer internship with the Center for Community Studies in Ghana, West Africa and academic engagements in Poland, Israel, and Mexico.

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from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and a Master of Social Work from Washington University and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She has taught social worker courses at Washington University and University of Missouri-St. Louis. Ms. Weinstein also serves on the Board of Directors for Joint Neighborhood Ministries, the Accra Foundation for Intercultural Communication and Awareness, Cornett’s Closet, The Brown School Alumni Board, and for the Worker’s Rights Board of Jobs with Justice.
Chapter Five
“Inner and Outer Parks and Boulevards:”
A Plan for a Sustainable St. Louis

While most people tend to associate the concepts of sustainability and environmental consciousness as recent concerns, the planners of the 1907 plan anticipated many of the same issues that we face today: the health effects of pollution, the need to encourage an active lifestyle, the consequences of suburban sprawl, the economic benefits of attractive surroundings, etc. So while the Civic League would have never used the words “green” or “sustainability,” these were the very things that were driving them when they generated their plans for a system of parks and boulevards in St. Louis. Like today, they were concerned about creating an environment that would foster the “proper physical and moral development of [St. Louis’s] population.” As they noted, while preserving and enhancing the region’s open space made the area more attractive, stimulated economic development and increased property values, “these are matters of small consideration when compared to the imperative necessity of supplying the great mass of the people with some means of recreation to relieve the unnatural surroundings in crowded cities.”

The thrust of the report was creating a massive network of connected open spaces. Much like the Great Rivers Greenway District, the Park and Boulevard planners wanted to maximize the effect of individual parks or reservations by tying them together with a system of greenways or boulevards. The committee which prepared the report was a truly impressive group. It was chaired by John Davis, but it also included other prominent St. Louissans like David Francis—the ex-governor who was the force behind the World’s Fair—and Albert Lambert, the namesake of the eventual municipal airport in St. Louis. However, the real intellectual powers of the group were George Kessler, the famous landscape architect, and William Trelease, who was the Director of the Missouri Botanical Gardens at the time.

Undoubtedly, the majority of the scheme was the brain-child of George Kessler. Kessler had established his reputation by erecting boulevard systems throughout the Midwest, but the plan for St. Louis and environs may have been his most important work. Indeed, the first prong of the report’s five-prong strategy was a plan for Kingshighway that had already been largely implemented. In preparation for the Fair, the city had contracted Kessler to prepare a plan that would connect the city’s main parks together. The idea was to make Kingshighway into a boulevard that would extend from Chain of Rocks on the north to the Altenheim on the south that would tie O’Fallon, Forest Park, Tower Grove, and Carondolet parks into a huge interconnected system. The second prong (which was an incredible missed opportunity for the city) proposed another boulevard that would run along the bluffs on the southern end of the city that would overlook the Mississippi and the Illinois floodplain. Believing that the Mississippi had the same potential for St. Louis as the Seine had for Paris and the Danube had for Budapest, the idea was to create a pleasure drive that would be like Riverside Drive in New York City.

But the real meat of the plan was a proposal for three boulevard rings west of Kingshighway. The first involved the River Des Peres. Like the other two rings, the primary purpose of this ring was to create open space. But this plan also had practical applications. Flooding had been a continuous problem with the river. As the Civic League planners explained, by straightening the river, the velocity of the river would increase which would drastically lower the flood line. Once the river was straightened, the new channel would be flanked by dual boulevards.
on both sides of the newly landscaped flood basin. However, what is interesting is that the plan foreshadowed the creation of the Metropolitan Sewer District by almost a generation in noting that suburban round-off was making “the River Des Peres nothing less than a foul smelling open sewer.” As they correctly observed, the increase in suburban population was making it “absolutely imperative that the city take some steps to care for the large amount of sewage coming from the county.” The second part of the ring never really materialized. It involved another greenway from Forest Park to the Chain of Rocks Park.

The next boulevard ring proposal, however, was implemented almost completely intact 30 years later. This ring was intended to connect the middle ring of suburbs which were assumed that they would be annexed in the near future. This boulevard was intended to start at the Chain-of-Rocks then proceed to Ferguson. It would then veer southwesterly to Woodson Road where it would tie into Kirkwood. At this point, it would take a southeasterly track to Webster where it veered in an eastern direction towards the Mississippi. In short, it was more or less the path that Lindbergh would take in the thirties. The main difference in the two plans is that the League assumed that this would be a growth boundary of sorts that would outline what was presumed to be the borders of the city a generation out.

The last ring was seen by Kessler and the other planners as an exurban recreation area that would tie the major county parks together. While most of these recreation points already pre-existed and could be reached by inter-urban streetcar, the idea again was to enhance the overall impact of these parks together—much like the Great Rivers Greenway. Like the middle ring, this outer ring would be landscaped boulevard that would connect the Chain of Rocks Park, the Charbonier Reservation, the Creve Coeur Reservation, the Meramec Highlands, and the Jefferson Barracks. Although this essentially became the path of I-270, transportation was not the primarily consideration of the Kessler and the committee. Instead of being a seventy-mile-an-hour expressway, the boulevard which they envisioned was to be for pleasure driving, enabling St. Louisans to go from one recreational area to the next.

The planners knew they were proposing a lot. They were calling for the eventual acquisition of three acres of open space and sixty miles of boulevards, and that would entail considerable legislation and expenditures of several millions of public revenues. However, they were confident that the “legislation can be secured” and that they could convince their fellow St. Louisans (which they included those in the county, as well) that the “return to their respective treasuries [would be] many times what the improvements cost.”

What is significant in the message of George Kessler and the rest of the committee for contemporary St. Louisans is how they viewed the cost and the benefits from their park and boulevard plan—from promoting sustainability. Much like environmentalists of today, Kessler and the committee noted that “parks and parkways should be classed as an investment to the city.” They could increase property valuations in both city and suburb. They would attract a “desirable class of citizens”—sort of like Richard Florida’s “creative class.” It would stimulate the building of fine residences. Plus it would increase tourism. “But more than all else,” the committee argued, “they furnish an antidote to the unnatural conditions which must accompany the segregation of large populations in crowded cities.” It may seem like very foreign language to 21st century ears, but what they were talking about was improving the city’s quality of life for all of its citizens, even those who lived in inner city slums and were breathing a haze of coal smoke. For them, it all boiled down to the fact that the “future test of civic spirit in American cities will be the care which they show for the physical and moral development of their people by supplying them with those elements of
nature which city life tends to destroy.”

The 21st century term to describe “the antidote to the unnatural conditions” is sustainability. Four authors address an important question—what are key elements of sustainability for the St. Louis region?

Nicholas Guehlstorf begins the chapter with a very smart analysis of land re-use. Brownfield sites are a legacy of the region’s commercial and industrial past, and the high cost of doing business on Brownfield sites often makes them less attractive to economic development. Guehlstorf looks at Metro East, which was historically home to the region’s heavy industry, such as the refining of oil, industrial metal works, livestock slaughtering, chemical processing, and railroads to transport it all. These historic land uses, as well as more modern land uses such as gas stations and dry cleaners, pose environmental risks. Air, water, soil, and the waste stream are all affected by human behavior and, at some point, a region must address the legacy of pollution left behind. Guehlstorf provides a significant analysis of each of these areas of concern, and points to a path of sustainability. He draws from the work of Henry David Thoreau, and makes one wonder if perhaps “life in a communion with Nature” could be a realistic policy goal for the St. Louis region.

Building on Guehlstorf’s analysis of Metro East, Sarah Coffin examines pollution on the Missouri side of the river. Brownfields pose a significant problem for urban cores that already experience issues of poverty, abandonment, and blight. In theory, these are exactly the types of communities that certain tax incentives should be helping, but the truth is that these communities have many other issues than just Brownfields. Coffin gives an important perspective to the issue of redevelopment, and notes that redevelopment will continue to be piecemeal until a more sustainable policy is developed.

Janet Wilding and Brian Werner tell the story of the McKinley Bridge. While this may seem like a simple piece of infrastructure, it is so much more than just a bridge. It is a monument to cooperation, sustainability, and land re-use. When St. Louis was going through its 2004 visioning process (which began in the mid-1990s), one of the concepts that came forward was to link the various recreational trails in Missouri and Illinois. Ultimately, the Great Rivers Greenway District in Missouri and the Metro East Parks and Recreation District in Illinois began assembling an impressive team of public, private, and nonprofit players to make the McKinley Bridge a world-class example of a multi-use bridge. It stands today as an exciting example of the potential the region has when it chooses to cooperate across political boundaries.

Ron Coleman tells the story of the Meramec River—and how it is a success story for the preservation of open space. (It should be noted that others, including Patrick Sullivan in Chapter 4, argue a contrary point). Beginning in the 1960s, the Meramec River basin was being considered for its potential as a developable site for a large-scale recreational venue. Damming the river would allow for a major recreational lake to be established within easy reach of the metropolitan St. Louis population. Naturalists began protesting the development, and after a ballot issue in the 1970s, prevailed in preserving the river in its natural state. The land that had been acquired for lake development has become park space that is enjoyed by thousands regularly. The Meramec River is a great example of people stepping forward and making important land use decisions.
SEARCHING FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE COMMERCE
Nicholas P. Guehlstorf

INTRODUCTION

Henry David Thoreau’s environmental message that individuals must transform themselves if society is to be transformed is a noteworthy political commentary that might yield some real change in the Illinois region of the St. Louis Metropolitan Area (SMA). The words of Henry David Thoreau are considered some of the most significant of American political philosophy and literature. *Walden, Or A Life in the Woods*—for example—is referenced as influencing the prominent American writers Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville. Also, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi both acknowledge Thoreau’s “On Civil Disobedience” as part of their inspiration to politically repudiate accepted social arrangements. For this writing, however, the real import of Thoreau is in combining both his naturalist literature and moral philosophy. In doing so, one remarks on the “importance of a life led in a communion with Nature.” In order to provoke political thoughts or actions that are more sustainable, this essay will juxtapose the enduring ideas of Thoreau with some explanations of the current state of environmental affairs of the Metro East.

The surrounding Metropolitan areas of St. Louis have demonstrated a pattern of political decision making in which the permanent benefits of environmental sustainability are sacrificed for the transitory gains of economic development. In explicating the numerous environmental concerns of the Illinois portion of the St. Louis Metropolitan Area, it is challenging to avoid painting an ominous portrait. However, this is not my intent. Rather, my objective is to extract trends within the fruition of these environmental problems and ultimately offer prescriptions for effective political and social reform. In the balance of this essay, I will offer a regional description and local characterization of urban sprawl, air pollution, watershed conservation, and waste management. Unearthing the foundations of these problems may guide ecological citizens and/or civil leaders in providing helpful suggestions for environmental stewardship. Demonstrating his self-awareness as both a citizen and scholar of environmental politics, Henry David Thoreau once famously wrote, “What I have to do is to
see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.”

THE ISSUE OF URBAN SPRAWL

Like any political phenomenon worthy of research, a large part of the debate is focused simply on defining and measuring the term in question. Just as the nouns “poverty,” “war,” and “democracy” are continually redefined and disputed by administrators and academics, some universal ideas of urban sprawl can be discerned from the myriad of interested parties. For instance, land use legal scholars argue that the Metro East has serious urban sprawl issues as it is an area with expansion of low-density housing along the fringe of the city and development of rural houses on land greater than one acre. Similarly, activists at the Sierra Club would argue there is no land conservation in the region because communities are geographically separated as areas where people shop, live, work, recreate, and educate. Finally, government regulators in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would describe the Illinois portion of the MSA as an automobile-dependent metro region with too much unplanned, unlimited, or fragmented land use decisions that have resulted in awkward commercial gains and significant farm loss. Most definitions of urban sprawl have some of these common elements, and all observers of the Metro East, Illinois would argue that land consumption is increasingly more rapid than population growth. This is not a problem with proper suburban and rural zoning and planning. Without precautionary development, environmentally conscious citizens and modern planners project the local region may have the attributes shown in the following illustration:
Using 2000 census data, Smart Growth America ranked the St Louis Metro Area as 35th among the 83 sprawling metropolitan areas considered in the country. The Smart Growth index measures sprawl as an attempt by city planners to control for residential population density; healthy mix of jobs, homes, and services; strength of downtowns; and manageable access of city streets. This overall index for St. Louis was 94.51, which indicates a less than average attempt of city planners to consider smart growth. First published by the United States Department of Agriculture, the environmental policy typology of smart growth is an ad-hoc collection of regulations of land use policies to influence development patterns in the middle of old cities and encourage multiple-use or moderate density expansion.

Essentially this means limiting the growth in suburbs or periphery communities along with
the conservation and/or preservation of green space and farmland. In my assessment, “smart” growth is contingent upon smart public administrators. Unfortunately due to economic pressures, many environmentally conscious ideas are never implemented and thus should be called referred to as “suggested” growth. This is because even if the development is smartly designed, incentives for green building or urban renewal are often dismissed for unsustainable economic development or discouraged by leaders as it questions individual property rights. A perfect example of this occurred in the 2008 landmark court decision City of Belleville v. Green Mount Development, LCC, where an ecologically minded resident of the city claimed that the 27 million dollar Tax Increment Financing Plan (TIF) to create a strip mall in place of agricultural productions was not the best use of public resources and smart city planning. Although the citizen plaintiff beat city hall, the development still occurred because of commercial demand and market forces. A historical perspective of urban sprawl is profoundly noted by Henry David Thoreau in the following Walden passage: “I discovered many a site for a house not likely to be soon improved, which some might have thought too far from the village, but to my eyes the village was too far from it.” Similar to this end, in the next section I will attempt to describe the environmental issues of air with a subtle suggestion that civil protest or communal movement is more than necessary.

THE CHALLENGES WITH POLLUTED AIR

Henry David Thoreau in “Resistance to Civil Government” once explained that “the opponents...are not a hundred thousand politicians..., but a hundred thousand merchants and farmers here, who are more interested in commerce and agriculture than they are in humanity.” Perhaps, a strengthened environmental consciousness of the St. Louis Metropolitan area is the only possible means to reform current practices that result in high levels of particulate matter, ozone, and Toxics Release Inventory air pollution. First of all, using EPA data calculations about the average hourly amount of pollutants in the air—in parts per million from 2004 through 2006—the American Lung Association and Associate Press list the St. Louis Metro Area as one of the eight worst areas in the country. This puts our humble Midwestern city in the same company as Los Angeles, California; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Washington D.C.-Baltimore, Maryland. The particle pollution ranking tracks ash, soot, diesel exhaust, aerosols and other particulates and is a serious health issue to continually breathing air with high particle pollution. Secondly with regard to ozone air pollution, the Metro East is a case study of environmental injustice worthy of study and change. Ground-level ozone—a public health issue as it is an irritant that damages lung tissue and aggravates respiratory disease—is formed by the environmental cocktail of heat, sunlight, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides in the lower atmosphere.

Although the Metro East has a different political culture and capacity than St. Louis, it has the same—if not worse—problems with air pollution. Generally this is illustrated by the following map of the sampling area that is non-attainment of ozone in the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990:
Specifically, the following chart reports the above average parts per billion of annual emissions of ozone from the air sampling sites that are part of the air quality conformity analysis and determination required by the EPA, Department of Transportation, and Illinois State, regional and local governments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monitor</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood River</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryville</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East St. Louis</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerseyville</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As such of these averages surpassing national guidelines, the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council is in the process of developing better projects and programs to lower ozone, particulate matter, and carbon monoxide. To reduce ozone from the harmful levels they are at currently, the Metro East must control nitrogen oxides (NOx) and VOCs from cars, trucks, and buses; however, local government leaders must also address the industrial sources. While the region is encouraging enhanced vehicle inspections and a higher percentage of reformulated gas, some real attention must be paid to the toxic releases from area employers and manufacturers. That is, the local mobile source control measures are in correspondence with Federal vehicle emission regulations, but the issues of statutory source regulations remain problematic. Consider for instance, the abbreviated chart of the risk based perspective for air pollution from stationary points for St. Louis Metro Area:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of reported pollutant releases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Granite City Steel</td>
<td>Granite City, IL</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Solutia</td>
<td>Sauget, IL</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tosco Refinery</td>
<td>Wood River, IL</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. American Steel</td>
<td>Granite City, IL</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Big River Zinc</td>
<td>Sauget, IL</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Occidental Chem.</td>
<td>Sauget, IL</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Laclede Steel</td>
<td>Alton, IL</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Olin Corp.</td>
<td>East Alton, IL</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Cerro Copper</td>
<td>Sauget, IL</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Precoat Metals</td>
<td>Granite City, IL</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Chemetco</td>
<td>Hartford, IL</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is my contention that the traditional practices of manufacturing, construction, industry, and automobiles must be challenged by calling into question the picture of the environment it portrays. As any good environmentalist would explain, while her identity is independent of her attachments, her aims are not. As such, I think concerned Metro East citizens who have a fuller or more accurate perspective of our local environmental challenges should begin to influence Metro East leaders to address air pollution.

**BETTER WATER CONSERVATION**

Poetically, Thoreau wrote that, “Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains.” Unlike other parts of the country that has fresh water scarcity and/or contaminated aquifers, the only significant problem of water in the Metro St. Louis area is non-point source contamination from the loss of wetlands. This is not to indicate that water is not polluted in the region, rather most of the problems like the challenges posed by the refineries in South Roxanna, Wood River, and Hartford have or are being successfully managed. There is, however, a significant natural resource obstruction with fresh water and wetland destruction. Wetlands filter and recharge groundwater and hold excess surface water. Land use in the United States, however, has dismissed these ecological benefits for economic gains as millions of acres of wetlands have been destroyed in order to create farms and develop cities. As such, strict regulatory guidelines and volunteer pro-
grams with market-based incentives have been implemented to preserve or conserve wetland acres and functions. For instance, all urban or suburban development within the last decade must mitigate on-site or compensate off-site for any wetland acres destroyed. Wetland filtration is very important in areas where runoff from crop fields is one of the primary sources of non-point source pollution. Perhaps this is more significant in the state of Illinois, which supports more river wetland areas than any other state in the Union. This runoff often contains chemical residuals from herbicides and pesticides which have been shown to have detrimental effects in humans. For instance, researchers in *Environmental Health Perspectives* found that Missouri men with detectable levels of herbicides (atrazine, alachlor, and diazinon) in their bodies were 30 times more likely to have defective sperm. In fact, the EPA states atrazine exposure may also lead to congestion of heart, lungs and kidneys; low blood pressure; muscle spasms; and damage to glands.

Approximately one-third of Missouri citizens on public water obtain their drinking water from groundwater, while the rest are supplied from surface water. More importantly, 100% of self-supplied water is from groundwater. Normal treatment methods at water facilities and wetland retention processes are able to remove many of these contaminants before the water reaches consumers. Nonetheless, in suburban areas that encompass the Mississippi and Missouri river watersheds, especially in the SMA, there has been an extensive occurrence of economic development since the 1993 flood. In the past decade, for example, there has been at least 4,200 acres of new development on the Missouri flood plain, which represents 2.2 billion dollars of business for new shopping centers, highways, and commercial offices. For instance, Chesterfield Commons—the largest strip mall in America—consists of 47,000 acres of floodplain development. Although the general public does not understand the ecological consequences of changing the course of the river or relocating wetland areas, they do grasp the notion of economic development. That is, few in the community are forlorn about the loss of wetland as it is a 400 million dollar project that has made surrounding property values increase by five times their original assessment. Suburban wetland mitigation banking is very rare as most compensation is done on the equal acreage of private property that developers have drained or filled. Although the USDA indicates that Wetland Reserve Programs are the most successful for suburban and rural wetland conservation with more than 1,750,000 acres enrolled nationwide by 2005, many environmental scholars argue they are not the best incentive-based programs for restoring and conserving marginal or flood-prone lands. Because natural wetlands are important components in removing contaminants from surface and groundwater, mitigating their loss is important for public health. In fact, it is more important in low population areas that use less mitigation banking—like the Illinois portion of the SMA that does seem to be participating in this type of compensation a lot. Again, the intention of this essay is to examine the consequences of environmental problems for the area in order to generate some dialogue about more effective rural wetland restoration methods. As the number and quality of wetlands available to filter out pollutants decreases, the potential for those pollutants to be passed on through drinking water sources increases.

**THE NEED FOR LESS WASTE**

Although not specifically addressing waste, Thoreau once advised “Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. Turn the old; return to them.” Hazardous and/or toxic waste—solid and liquid byproducts of manufacturing processes—in the United States are generated at an alarming mass or volume and, if not stored or disposed of properly, can cause serious public health risks. Since 1980 the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation,
and Liability Act (CERCLA) or Superfund has been the only EPA program for cleaning up contaminated industrial, commercial, and residential sites in the country. As a consequence of the significant ongoing industrial legacy of the Metro East, there are more than a couple Superfund sites. The municipality of Granite City, for instance, has two such contaminated areas. On private land owned and operated by Taracorp, involved in mining and smelting processes, a site was listed on the National Priority List (NPL) for the most dangerous land in the country in 1986 and fully remediated by 2000. Similarly, in 1996 an abandoned 20 acre facility owned by the Jennison-Wright Corporation was listed as a Superfund site due to the improper use, storage, and disposal of creosote, pentachlorophenol, and zinc naphthanate used in the treatment of wood railroad ties. Despite three incremental cleanup actions, the remediation is not complete and will not commence until further funding is provided as the total bill is $18.2 million. Additionally, the former village of Monsanto, Illinois, now Sauget, has two seriously contaminated areas that were proposed for the NPL on June of 1996 and September of 2001, respectively. The Sauget Area 1 and Area 2 sites were each proposed twice for the NPL, but neither proposed listing was finalized as there are multiple parties responsible for at least 12 different chemical contaminants in Dead Creek, some of which were first found in the early 1940s.

Due to the number of sites already under the regulatory oversight of Superfund, in 1995 the EPA provided local governments with seed grants to create programs for the redevelopment of land that was under the scope of CERCLA. For specific legal reasons, Brownfield legislation became an amendment to CERCLA in 2001 under the title “Small Businesses Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act.” The law eliminated some liability problems for developers and includes sites that are perceived to be contaminated by a controlled substance. According to federal government data, Brownfields include, but are not limited to, vacant lots, dry cleaners, gas stations, and huge industrial sites. Although the Illinois region of the SMA has some potential Brownfields that are large former industrialized areas—the steel mill in Alton or refinery in Wood River, for instance—the majority of Brownfields in this target area should be small properties that exist in all communities, such as abandoned grocery stores, vacant parking lots, or old town dumps.

Political leaders should consider the fact that despite the majority of Brownfield potential occurs in low-income areas that historically have problems with economic development, most successful Brownfield projects occur in high-income municipalities that have multiple successful projects for community growth. Despite the need and revenue potential of Brownfield programs, poor communities simply deter prospective redevelopment projects. For instance, at the time of this writing, the Illinois portion of the MSA has seven successful Brownfield projects while the Missouri portion has 427. Environmental injustice—a controversial issue which was first identified in the United States in the early 1980’s—asserts that low-income neighborhoods, particularly minority communities, suffer a disproportionate share of pollution and environmental hazards. Concluding that disadvantaged communities, which have experienced little economic growth, should receive Brownfield grants to spur development opportunities is both an obvious and uninformed proposal. Brownfields is an obvious policy suggestion because environmental justice literature already tells us that areas of blight are where polluting facilities exist and contamination problems are numerous. Nonetheless, Illinois leaders needs to facilitate Brownfield grant-writing for the Metro East area to transform the contaminated past.
CONCLUSION

In opposition to the poetic eminence of Thoreau’s writing, many political critics argue that the body of Thoreau’s work is a failed quest for individual and social change. Quite simply, rather than theorizing in the woods as a Thoreauan dissenter, a better practice would be fighting for environmental justice and organizing a democratic community with ecological concerns. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau’s teacher, is frequently referenced for stating that “Money often costs too much.” Perhaps Metro East city developers and planners should collectively ponder: What has the pursuit of money cost the natural resources, civil society, public health and community well-being? It is doubtful that public administrators will listen to dead transcendentalist philosophers like Thoreau and Emerson, who inform us that it is more important to have a rich and sustainable community than to have a municipality that is rich monetarily with no limits to growth, consumption, and development. However, it is possible that business and civic leaders will listen to Patrick McKeehan and James Pennekamp—the head of the Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois and director of regional economic development—who have helped to create “Vision 20-20.” It is a strategic plan for the Metro East that has some limited growth concepts, new transportation solutions, cleaner industrial processes, and job opportunities that are more forward thinking than manufacturing. Furthermore, it should be noted that there are many Thoreau-like citizens in the Metro East. This can be seen through the actions of Granite City residents who were intervener-defendants in a lawsuit that opposed minimum remedy clean-up and went to court to support a more aggressive liability for personally responsible parties regarding the superfund sites in their backyard. Additionally, the city of Alton, Illinois became one of the Sierra Club’s “Cool Cities,” which city leaders to join the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement (USCPA), a compact to reduce global warming pollution in their cities by 7% below 1990 levels by the year 2012. This is an essential component in achieving sustainability, as much environmental policy research indicates that as economic measures and indicators increase, standard of living, environmental awareness, and community well-being follow suit. Economic growth, however, must not be visionless and simply for the sake of development. It should be sustainable and reflective.
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About the Author

Associate Professor Guehlstorf teaches in the Department of Political Science and the Environmental Sciences program at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. Generally, his research focuses on the integration of democratic values into environmental policy by considering the theoretical problems with citizen involvement, economic development, and the effect of scientific information on decision making. Dr. Guehlstorf’s Springer published book, *The Political Theories of Risk Analysis*, offers a broad explanation of environmental democracy. Specifically, his scholarship has examined the practical policy considerations environmental democracy has for genetically modified food regulations, sustainable farming practices, Brownfield redevelopment programs, and wetland laws. Some of this work has been published in peer reviewed journals such as *Environmental Science and Policy* and the *Journal of Agriculture and Environmental Ethics*. 
In 1995 the EPA awarded its first brownfield pilot grant in the amount of $200,000 to the city of St. Louis, setting this region among the earliest locations in the country to receive federal brownfield aid.¹ These early brownfield grants were to be used for site assessment to determine the level of contaminants present in high profile urban revitalization projects as a demonstration, to attract otherwise cautious developers. For the vast amounts of vacant and abandoned, former industrial/commercial land in cities like St. Louis, private developers and bankers were unwilling to accept an undefined level of liability risk without a guarantee of public assistance. This federal government action gave official recognition to the experience of developers: that the potential for contamination of former industrial and commercial sites functioned as an obstacle to redevelopment and that public assistance was needed to stimulate the development process.

These first grant awards kicked off around the US what has become a broadly supported incentive program designed to jumpstart community efforts to redevelop brownfields and a marked shift from the EPA’s previous approach to contaminated land, which considered only the regulatory mandates for dictating cleanup requirements.² According to the most recent US Conference of Mayors brownfield survey, over $200 million in federal funding has been leveraged, yielding more than 1,400 completed projects and more than 10,900 acres of redeveloped land. Communities across the country have realized more than $90 million in additional local tax revenue and over 83,000 newly created jobs.³ Brownfield investment in St. Louis has likewise followed suit. In St. Louis city and county alone there has been over $3.8 million in federal investment since 1995.⁴

The state of Missouri enacted brownfield legislation in 1995 that allowed a more flexible approach to brownfield cleanup and redevelopment, again among those early states leading the US in recognizing the need to address brownfields outside the traditional methods of environmental remediation. The Missouri Brownfield Voluntary Cleanup Program (BVCP), administered by the state Department of Natural Resources (MO DNR) is designed to provide both rigorous environmental oversight and development flexibility. Developers enter a site into the program voluntarily and agree to regulatory oversight. In exchange,
they are allowed to design a more flexible clean up plan based on proposed future use. Known as Risk Based Corrective Action (RBCA) this approach considers both current and potential future exposure to contaminants based on a jointly agreed upon site plan that outlines details of the developer’s proposed future uses for the site. For those projects where the plan allows for a less than complete cleanup, site controls are put in place with long term monitoring plans attached that are filed with the local property records office. The outcome is often a more cost effective cleanup.

Yet as one would expect, concerns are often raised over the indisputable fact that remediation plans do not always call for complete contamination removal. To be sure, there is a potential for environmental justice claims over the potential for future harm to humans. Additionally, one might question what will happen when a proposed future land use changes and reopens the risk potential. We have placed much faith in the veracity of local land record offices or in their ability to enforce these environmental deed restrictions to prevent future harm. To date, this question of re-openers has not demonstrated any real threat in programs across the US (although these programs have only been in place for less than 20 years) yet one might find it difficult to challenge the outcome of such programs. To date in St. Louis city and county there have been 426 applications received and 223 certificates of completion issued. Thus, developers have successfully remediated 223 brownfield properties and have either determined 203 sites either do not warrant cleanup or are still in the process of determining the best course of action. As of this writing, there have been no re-openers in the St. Louis Metro area.

In the years since those first federal brownfield pilot grant awards, the EPA has further clarified its stance on brownfields. Most notably, it has legally defined post-development liability risk and effectively limited potential developer liability for brownfield projects—provided developers follow Agency defined procedures during cleanup and redevelopment. Additionally, federal support has been leveraged with state funding, and creatively used by communities to develop increasingly successful redevelopment projects. In Missouri the state Department of Economic Development supports the MO BVCP and federal brownfield investment with their own brownfield redevelopment program that offers remediation tax credits tied to permanent job retention/creation. To date, St. Louis City and County have invested more than $98.8 million in these state brownfield tax credits. The following figure shows the level of investment by year since program inception.

Locally, the brownfield experience in St. Louis is typical for a mid-sized Midwestern post-industrial city. The city and region were built by a once-thriving industrial economy that collapsed in the 1970s and 80s. As we witnessed the collapse of the auto and steel industries and the restructuring of the industrial sector, those businesses and industries that survived faced an urban landscape marked with reminders of this industrial past. Compounding these economic struggles, desegregation efforts and racial strife fueled further flight outward as population shifted from the urban core areas of the region.
Like most post industrial, brownfield cities, the city of St. Louis experienced a dramatic and consistent decline in population over the past four and half decades that paralleled its industrial decline. Between 1970 and 2000 the city lost nearly 275,000 residents, while St. Louis County’s population grew steadily by around 20,000 residents per decade. This downward population trend seems to have abated in the city as demonstrated by the up-tick in population between 2000 and 2008 by more than 6,000 residents. Conversely, St. Louis County appears to be witnessing a leveling off in population with a drop in residents of about 20,000.

Unfortunately, even while the city of St. Louis continues to demonstrate the highest population densities in the region, the city’s declining population is also reflected in the declining population density. These decreased population densities tend to be even more dispersed in the more distressed neighborhoods, thus this does not bode well for any sort of wide spread brownfield redevelopment. In 1970 the city’s population represented about 10,200 persons per square mile. By 2008, density levels were around 56% of the 1970 level, falling to around 5,700 persons per square mile. In contrast, St. Louis County population density has remained fairly stable over the past four and a half decades.
Vacancy trends in a community can tell a further story of either brownfield struggles or success. As one would expect, vacancy levels are highest in St. Louis City, reflecting the industrial trends for the city and region. Yet, while the share of vacant units in St. Louis City increased from 15.4% in 1990 to 16.6% in 2000, the number of vacant units actually declined. This is due to a nearly 18,600 unit decline in the total housing stock due brought about by demolition and remodeling between 1990 and 2000. Conversely, the share of vacant units increased by another 10,000 units between 2000 and 2007, spiking the vacancy rate to 21.8%. This trend in vacancy rates tells the tale of two cities: one where brownfield activity is thriving, and one where the brownfield presents but one more barrier to redevelopment. In St. Louis County, vacancy rates have remained below 10% yet we notice a jump in 2007 calling into question the potential for a creeping blight from the city.
Table 4: Median Home Price

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis City</td>
<td>$49,700</td>
<td>$63,900</td>
<td>$116,700</td>
<td>$88,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis County</td>
<td>$82,600</td>
<td>$116,600</td>
<td>$173,500</td>
<td>$142,254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown by these trends, St. Louis City and County appear to demonstrate general success in their efforts to regenerate and embrace the region’s industrial past. Generally, brownfields in St. Louis are not the barriers they once were. Yet, that success is tempered by the spatial patterns of redevelopment. The distribution of benefits received might not be uniform.

In St. Louis the pattern of brownfield redevelopment typically follows the market. Where there is market activity, there is brownfield redevelopment activity. One can then assume that in the more distressed, lower income neighborhoods brownfields are not being redeveloped. They remain one more barrier to community revitalization. This evidence can be seen in the map below by the patterns of vacant property relative to BVCP sites in St. Louis City and County. Per the United States Postal Service, nearly 11% of the city’s more than 206,000 addresses were categorized as vacant during the 4th quarter of 2008. In St. Louis County the vacancy rate was 4.25% of more than 502,000 addresses for the same time period. The following map shows the distribution of vacant addresses per census tract relative to the locations of BVCP sites. The concentration of brownfield redevelopment activity is generally occurring where the vacancy rates are lower.

The unfortunate reality then becomes, those who live near vacant structures continue to suffer adverse impacts on property values, their sense of community, and overall quality of life. Additionally, vacant properties are often a proxy for brownfields. They contain an array of conditions (illegal dumping, leaking sewage, asbestos, lead, and fire hazards) that pose serious threats to public health and safety. The volume of distressed properties, the transaction complexities, and the redevelopment costs serve as barriers to bringing redevelopment efforts to scale in these already distressed neighborhoods.

Following the logic displayed in the map above, the spatial elements associated with these patterns of brownfield projects relative to vacancy highlight the general urban policy concern in two ways. First, while brownfield issues permeate all aspects of land use and development, they pose especially difficult problems for the distressed, low income neighborhoods. As has been argued by others, these urban areas are often the locations of the highest brownfield concentrations, and the fact that these properties are usually idle, abandoned or otherwise underutilized further fuels the blight of urban areas. Second, these sites are also usually the locations of the highest concentrations of poverty and crime thus it becomes even more important that these properties be returned to successful uses to address other, equally difficult urban issues. As a result, the reduction in demand for brownfield properties due to limited development potential leads to further abandonment of the surrounding area, which leads to erosion of the property tax base creating a downward spiraling effect on the health and vitality of the neighborhood.
Ultimately, the remaining challenge of brownfield redevelopment brings us to the threshold of a new research emphasis. Researchers continue to question the efficiency of a site-by-site approach that has relied on the market savvy of private developers to allocate brownfield resources. They are asking whether brownfield programs can play a critical role in the revitalization of distressed communities and if so, how can brownfield projects be positioned to achieve broader area wide impacts. Given the state of the economy there is a need to couple site specific brownfield planning efforts with a broader plan to capture emerging market momentum associated with area revitalization activity in a more sustainable way.
Endnotes
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Dr. Sarah L. Coffin is an associate professor at Saint Louis University in the Department of Public Policy Studies where she advises the Urban Planning and Real Estate Development Program. She has extensive background in developing information systems as decision tools. Specifically, she has developed indicator projects used to promote brownfield redevelopment in distressed neighborhoods and a system for evaluating the efficacy and efficiency of development tools. Her research interests include examining the impacts of brownfields, vacant properties, and more recently housing foreclosures on weak market economies and whether new ways of framing the redevelopment question might provide positive benefits for distressed communities. Additionally, Dr. Coffin is interested in understanding the connections between the green economy and global climate change policy. Specifically, she is exploring ways that the green collar jobs sector might work as a sustainable economic development strategy for weak market, former industrial cities. Prior to arriving in St. Louis, Dr. Coffin spent two years at the University of Louisville working for the US EPA’s Environmental Finance Center in Region 4 as a post doctoral researcher. While there she developed a brownfield information system for the Metro Louisville Government’s brownfield program. Dr. Coffin holds a Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning from the Georgia Institute of Technology, a Master’s degree in Urban Planning, Design, and Development from the Maxine Goodman Levin Cleveland State University, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Lake Erie College.
THINKING REGIONALLY:
PARTNERS CREATE A NEW
CONNECTION WITH MCKINLEY
BRIDGE BIKEWAY & TRESTLE
Janet Wilding and Bryan Werner

In 1996, a broad-based public-private effort called St. Louis 2004 began a planning process to revitalize the St. Louis region as a way to commemorate and celebrate the bicentennial of the Lewis & Clark Expedition and the 100th anniversary of the St. Louis World's Fair. Among the ideas that emerged was the concept to create the nation’s first bi-state, multi-county park district devoted to developing a regional, interconnected system of greenways, parks and trails for hiking, biking and numerous other outdoor activities.

Based on this recommendation to St. Louis 2004, a group of local citizens initiated Proposition C, the Clean Water, Safe Parks and Community Trails Initiative, which called for a 1/10th cent sales tax to be dedicated to the creation of a multi-county park district in Missouri and Illinois. In November 2000, voters approved Proposition C in the City of St. Louis, St. Louis County and St. Charles County, Missouri; and in St. Clair County and Madison County, Illinois.

The sales tax measure ensured that more than $20 million annually would be devoted to developing the regional system of greenways, parks and trails under the auspices of two multi-county park districts – The Great Rivers Greenway District (GRG) in Missouri and Metro East Park and Recreation District (MEPRD) in Illinois.

Together, GRG and MEPRD created a blueprint for The River Ring, a region-wide system of greenways, parks and trails that will transform the St. Louis Metropolitan area into a clean, green and connected region. When completed, nearly three million residents will have access to a connected park and trail system, as well as to streams, rivers and other natural resources that are located close to residential, employment and recreation areas.¹

- In Missouri, The River Ring will be a 600-mile web of more than 45 greenways within an area of 1,216 square miles.
- In Illinois, it will be a 275-mile web, featuring

²

¹

²
approximately 25 greenways encompassing a combined area of 1,400 square miles.

Creating an interconnected system of greenways, parks and trails will greatly enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors. New parks and miles of trails will connect communities and neighborhoods, bringing people together, stimulating economic development and inspiring innovative green space initiatives.

A great example of the ingenuity that has become the hallmark of implementing The River Ring is the multiple award-winning McKinley Bridge Bikeway and Trestle, an extraordinary 1.25-mile paved pathway over the Mississippi River that opened in June 2008. The project epitomizes regional cooperation on an important quality of life project. It also is an important part of the Confluence Greenway, a 200-square mile system of parks and conservation/recreation areas.

The Confluence Greenway features trails along 40 miles of both banks of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers from Downtown St. Louis/East St. Louis, past Alton to the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers and then across to St. Charles. The plan for the Confluence Greenway was begun in 1997 by a variety of public, private and nonprofit organizations, and endorsed in 2002 by GRG.

Since 2002, GRG has implemented several notable projects along the Confluence Greenway. The most significant was the rehabilitation in 2007 of the Riverfront Trail by GRG and the City of St. Louis. The project included repaving asphalt along the entire length of the 11-mile trail, creating rest stops at four new pocket park-like plazas and adding drinking fountains and signage at strategic locations along the trail.

With only a few existing bicycle and pedestrian crossings over the Mississippi River, another goal for the Confluence Greenway was to utilize the McKinley Bridge to create a connection between the 11-mile Riverfront Trail in Missouri and the 18-mile MCT Confluence Trail in Illinois, both along the shores of the Mississippi River. The project would also provide a multi-modal route for residents to commute to employment, education and shopping destinations.

Because of the foresight, leadership and actions of GRG and MEPRD working together, the McKinley Bridge Bikeway and Trestle was completed in 2008, creating one of the most innovative and scenic routes for bicyclists and pedestrians in the Midwest.

It’s most distinctive feature is a 3,000-ft. long by 14-ft. wide cantilevered lane overlooking the Mississippi River, providing panoramic views of the St. Louis skyline and navigation activity along the river.

On the Illinois side, the Bikeway adjoins the brand new McKinley Bridge Roadside Park. Developed by a committee of volunteers with the Southwestern Madison County Chamber of Commerce and dedicated in December 2007, the park features a nearly six-story tall steel sculpture entitled “Salute to Steel,” designed by John Celuch of Inland Design in Edwardsville.

At dedication ceremonies, Celuch said the sculpture salutes the steel industry that was responsible for turning a small farming community into an industrial giant that attracted immigrants from all across Europe. He also explained that the three large rings at the top of the monument represent the Tri-Cities of Granite City, Madison and Venice, which still to this day provide the majority of the workforce in the steel industry.

On the Missouri side, the Bikeway extends from the Trestle, a scenic 2,400-ft. long by 24-ft. wide paved path that was converted from an abandoned elevated railroad track. Developed simultaneously with the McKinley Bridge Bikeway, the Trestle descends from the full height of the Bikeway to street level where it provides a direct connection to the popular Riverfront Trail.
The Trestle, considered the “Crown Jewel” of the McKinley Bikeway development, distinguishes St. Louis as only the third city in the world--after the High Line in New York City and the Promenade Plantée in Paris--to convert a historic elevated steel trestle into a linear urban recreation amenity.

The Trestle currently is being engineered to extend the elevated park experience an additional 2.8 miles into downtown St. Louis. This new segment of the Trestle will weave through a series of environments to include active industrial and manufacturing areas over Interstate 70, and eventually to residential areas north of downtown St. Louis. The elevated deck will provide unique views of downtown St. Louis, surrounding neighborhoods, the Mississippi River and the proposed new Mississippi River Bridge.

**HISTORY OF MCKINLEY BRIDGE**

Built of steel and concrete with a truss superstructure sitting on four limestone piers, the McKinley Bridge was built in 1910 for $4 million dollars by the Illinois Traction System (ITS) to extend its tracks into St. Louis. Named for William B. McKinley, president of ITS, it was designed by Ralph Modjeski, an engineer who was well-known for several bridges along the Mississippi River. For many years the bridge provided local access for the railroad’s network of freight and passenger electric interurban trains in Illinois, including local streetcars to Granite City. Ultimately, the four-lane route that served as the direct “McKinley Line” into St. Louis became a part of the historic Route 66 Highway System in the 1930’s.
The City of Venice purchased the bridge in 1958 with revenue bonds supported by toll charges. In the mid-1960's, the lanes within the main river truss spans were rehabilitated for automobile use for $8 million, which was twice the original construction cost of the entire bridge. Over the next 30 years the bridge slowly deteriorated. In October 2001, with open holes in the deck exposing the river below, the 97-year-old bridge was shut down when the Illinois Department of Transportation deemed it too dangerous for motorists.5

**TALE OF TWO CITIES, TWO COUNTIES, TWO DOTS AND TWO DISTRICTS**

The stage was set in 2004 for the Bikeway project when the City of Venice, City of St. Louis, Madison County, St. Clair County, Madison County Transit and Metro (Bi-State Development Agency) agreed to purchase the bonds and resolve the unpaid taxes on the McKinley Bridge, which already had been closed for three years.6

Control subsequently was transferred to the State of Illinois to refurbish and operate as a toll-free bridge. This action paved the way toward securing nearly $50 million in funding from the State of Illinois, Department of Transportation and the Federal Highways Administration to rehabilitate the structure. The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) proposed work on the bridge to include structural repairs, reconstruction of roadway structures and bridge approaches, and installation of new lighting.

During the initial design process for the bridge, many neighborhood and community advocates on both sides of the Mississippi expressed concern that the plans for the refurbished bridge did not include pedestrian and bicycle access. Although both the Eads and Old Chain of Rocks bridges had pedestrian and bicycle access, the McKinley Bridge crossing was important because of its mid-way location, approximately five miles between each of the two other bridges.

According to IDOT, adding pedestrian and bicycle access required that another party be prepared to assume the title for the entire bridge should it ever be closed to vehicular traffic. Following a personal request from St. Louis Mayor Francis G. Slay, GRG agreed to be involved in the chain of title. With this agreement in place in late 2004, IDOT agreed to add bicycle and pedestrian access on the McKinley Bridge.7

But, creating the bikeway added new challenges to an already complicated construction project. When the decision
finally was made to add a separate cantilevered lane for the bikeway, not only had all of the engineering already been completed for a bridge designed only for vehicular traffic, but there was absolutely no flexibility on the original construction deadline. Building a separate lane for the Bikeway required extensive re-engineering and involved a number of constraints. Success resulted from a commitment to the project and ongoing collaboration between the IDOT, Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT), Metro and the City of St. Louis, as well as GRG and MEPRD.

As part of its commitment to develop trails within the Confluence Greenway on St. Louis’ near north side, GRG provided more than $5 million for construction of the McKinley Bikeway. In addition, MEPRD contributed nearly $700,000 for engineering and construction and MoDOT provided $1,250,000 for construction, bringing the total budget to $7 million.

DEDICATION SYMBOLIZES COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The McKinley Bridge opened for vehicular traffic in December 2007 and six months later, in June 2008, the Bikeway was opened for bicyclists and pedestrians. At dedication ceremonies dignitaries from Missouri and Illinois led processions from each end of the bikeway to the middle for a symbolic ribbon “tying” to symbolize regional collaboration. Those who spoke were generous with praise, with remarks that included the following:

- “The impact on the region is significant. “The positive impact of the McKinley Bridge Bikeway demonstrates the importance of regional cooperation between Missouri and Illinois and focusing the region on the wise use of its existing resources and amenities,” said St. Louis City Mayor Francis G. Slay. “In addition to reconnecting communities across the Mississippi River, the McKinley Bridge Bikeway will have a long-lasting regional impact by providing economic, environmental and social benefits on both sides of the river.”

- Madison County Board Chairman Alan Dunstan highlighted another important aspect of the project. “Thanks to the vision and hard work of the Madison County Transit District (MCT), we have a world-class bikeway system featuring over 100 miles of interconnected trails in Madison County. The opening of this landmark project by MEPRD and Great Rivers Greenway brings us another step closer to providing Missouri residents with enhanced access to those trails.”

REGIONAL IMPACT WITH REGION WIDE REWARDS

From a regional perspective, GRG and MEPRD accomplished a lot more than enhancing a reconstructed bridge with a dedicated bikeway that paved the way for bicycle and pedestrian access across an important link in the region’s transportation network. The McKinley Bridge Bikeway demonstrated how connecting regional assets and initiatives could have a positive impact on future economic development, environmental sustainability, social capital and healthy lifestyles.

For example, from a sustainability perspective, the re-use of the existing McKinley Bridge structure saved millions of infrastructure dollars compared to building a new bridge. Environmental benefits included replanting native vegetation and short prairie grass adjacent to the Trestle, enhancing the ecology of the Mississippi River.

In addition, fuel consumption was reduced by providing a much shorter commute between Madison County and St. Louis City for vehicular traffic and by encouraging bicycling as an alternative transportation option.
The pathway also makes it easier to promote more community interactions by eliminating the barrier of separation created by the river. And, economic development, particularly in the neighboring communities that are adjacent to the Bridge, will be positively impacted with reduced transportation costs.

But, most importantly, the project underscored the power of collaboration across state lines between two cities, two regional park districts, two regional transit agencies and two state transportation departments.
Endnotes
5. Mason.
7. Crotzer.


About the Authors

Janet Wilding, Deputy Director for Administration for The Great Rivers Greenway District (GRG), served as project manager on behalf of GRG for the construction of the McKinley Bridge Bikeway, Branch Street Trestle and Riverfront Trail development projects. As one of GRG’s original staff, Wilding assisted in creating the vision and framework that currently guides the organization’s work. Her background includes 17 years in the public sector working in a wide variety of public policy initiatives, from political campaign work and congressional staffing to neighborhood housing advocacy, brownfield redevelopment, and municipal annexation and incorporations. Wilding has a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from St. Louis University.

Bryan Werner, a Planner for the Metro East Park and Recreation District in Collinsville, IL, helps coordinate planning, implementation, management, and administration for numerous regional projects the District is currently tackling. He has served in this position for the last four years. Mr. Werner holds a Bachelor of Science in Computer Management Information Systems and a Master of Public Administration and Policy Analysis from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.
The St. Louis Region has been blessed with a network of rivers and streams each with its own unique character, history and qualities. Our regional landscape is defined by the diversity of Missouri waterways. With over 56,000 miles of streams meandering their way through our state, we Missourians know that a river is many different things to many different people.

A river can be simply a means of transportation, as it was for Native Americans and early explorers—and still is today for the barge industry. A river can serve as habitat for plants, fish and wildlife. Rivers can serve as sources of fishing, hunting, trapping, swimming, boating and other forms of outdoor recreation. They can supply us with precious water for drinking, industry and agricultural purposes. And rivers can provide sand and gravel—some of the most abundant minerals mined by man.

A river may be dammed, dewatered, diverted or degraded. It can become a sewer for carrying municipal waste out of sight and out of mind. When swollen by heavy spring rains, a river can become downright mean and turbulent; during a mid-summer drought, it can turn passively gentle and seemingly still.

A river can be a thing of beauty—a thread of silver or blue flowing through a city of concrete or a shimmering pool reflecting the river corridor in some remote moonlit setting. A river can be an inspiration to painters, photographers, composers, writers or a solitary lost soul seeking solace and a re-identification with nature. Perhaps more than any other regional waterway, the Meramec River has bridged this broad spectrum of cultural and natural diversity.

From the Meramec's headwaters in the Ozarks near Salem, the river wanders for 220 miles before joining the Mississippi just south of St. Louis. With a watershed that drains nearly 4,000 square miles, the Meramec’s cool spring-fed waters provide a summer haven for countless boaters, canoeists, kayakers, swimmers, fishermen and other water lovers. Furthermore, the Meramec's broad gravel bars and associated riparian areas provide outdoor recreation for campers, hikers, bikers, birders, photographers, nature seekers, hunters, bank fishermen and rock skippers of all ages and levels of expertise.
What many may not realize is that the Meramec is also home to the greatest variety of aquatic life in the Midwest. Observant explorers revel in their continuous opportunities to discover the wealth of creatures sheltered in its fresh waters. The river contains 120 of the 574 native fresh water fish species in North America, including the Meramec Saddle Darter which lives only in the Meramec. In addition, Meramec’s rich mussel and crayfish population is not found in any other watershed on earth, and new native species are still being discovered in the river.

A DARK PERIOD IN THE RIVER’S HISTORY

The upper Meramec River has long been recognized as a beautiful float stream with excellent opportunities for outdoor recreation, but the lower river in years past had become badly neglected and berated. Discharge of raw sewage, careless dumping of trash, unregulated clubhouse development, unsightly in-stream gravel mining and a general lack of public access to the river all contributed to an image of the lower Meramec River as an undesirable place to visit. The irony is that before World War II, the Meramec River was the recreation capital for the entire St. Louis area.

During weekends and holidays of the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, thousands of people boarded trains in downtown St. Louis, Webster Groves or Kirkwood and headed for one of the many resort sites along the Meramec. Every weekend during the summer, folks would pour into places like Lincoln Beach or Glencoe (now part of Castlewood State Park) for canoeing, swimming, music, dancing or just plain fun.

In the summer of 1999, AAA Midwest Traveler published an article, “A River Runs Through It,” which referred to Castlewood State Park in St. Louis County. Author Hella Canepa reflected on the Meramec Valley’s vibrant history. “In the evenings, music and laughter echoed like boisterous hallucinations from gathering places, as summer people drifted among speakeasies and taverns. Lively melody spilled down the riverbanks from hotels, ballrooms, clubs, even a floating dance pavilion, where big-name bands played the dances.” It was said that Harry S. Truman came here as a United States senator, banging out “The Missouri Waltz” on the piano at a saloon in the valley.”

Canepa continued, “As any old-timer will tell you, there never was a time like the 1920’s and 30’s, and there never was a place like Castlewood, Mo. Located on the Meramec River, it was Eden, and it was famous.” Unfortunately, the Meramec went from boom to bust as recreation was replaced by exploitation, ending one of the river’s grandest chapters.

As transportation improved during the era following WWII, pleasure seekers were better able to travel to many other leisure destinations. Also, air conditioning became a new source of comfort beyond the cool waters of the river, so people started distancing themselves from the Meramec. Weekend retreats and resorts fell into disrepair. Floods took their toll, and the people abandoned the resort areas. In the 1950’s and 1960’s the lower Meramec was more often abused than used. Once the public rejected the Meramec, it became a disgracefully inviting bank side landfill—a polluted dumping ground.

With great strides in automobile travel, new highways and an exodus to the suburbs, the 1950s and 1960s found the Meramec Basin on the drawing boards of many governmental agencies. The basin became ground zero for many plans involving economic development, flood control and outdoor recreation. Developments like Lake of the Ozarks in Central Missouri, as well as Bull Shoals and Table Rock Lake deep in the Ozarks provided power generating, flood control and flat water recreation impoundments. Before long, the powers that be started speculating on the economic potential of a big water reservoir close to a large metropolitan area like St. Louis.

Hearnes, proposed an improvement concept for the Big, the Bourbeuse and the Meramec Rivers which would require an investment of 142 million dollars for the development of 64 main stream and upland reservoirs. Basically, this action plan was designed to bring flood relief, recreational pleasure, business opportunities, and economic benefits to many people. The report highlighted the generation of millions of new dollars in flood control projects, visitor sales and services, construction of new industries, highways, utilities, residences, second homes and resorts. The action plan made no mention of the tens of thousands of acres of rich, fertile farmland, habitat, species and natural resources to be inundated by billions and billions of gallons of water. The cool spring fed waters of the river were now viewed more like liquid gold to line the pockets of entrepreneurs, investors and speculators.

It was not bad enough that the river had become a polluted dumping ground and target for economic development, but a plan was also moving forward on somewhat the same track by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers to build a series of dams in the Meramec Basin as authorized by Congress during the 1930’s and 1940’s. In 1966, Congressional approval was given to the building of major impoundments on the Meramec, the Big River and the Bourbeuse River, regardless of the flooding of thousands of acres of rich farmland, wildlife habitat, and riparian natural features. Such plans brought even more potential demise for the beautiful free-flowing Meramec and its tributaries.

Yet another 72-page plan, prepared and released jointly by Jefferson and St. Louis County governments, called for designating 51 miles of the lower Meramec River (from near the City of Pacific and 14.5 miles of the Big River in the area of Brynes Mill) as a National Recreation Area. This co-county plan called for the creation and protection of a primarily natural area covering roughly 77,000 acres along these rivers for conservation and outdoor recreation. This timely idea was a forerunner to what we commonly refer to today as a “greenway.”

Final determination on the proposal was in the hands of the United States Congress with a recommendation from the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) for federal matching funds. Both Senator Edward V. Long and U.S. Representative Thomas Curtis expressed support of the proposal. Senator Long indicated that he would consider introducing legislation required to move the project along. “I firmly believe that St. Louis is a prime location for a National Recreation Area. It will be good for the whole metropolitan area and good for the millions of Americans who will be visiting
St. Louis in years to come,” commented Senator Long.

In December, 1967, Jefferson County Judge Charles Becker joined a group of citizen and government leaders on a float trip to inspect the designated river areas and to consider the many pros and cons of endorsing the preservation of such a large piece of real estate. Judge Becker concluded, “… I don’t know if we have the right not to preserve this unique area for the use of our children’s children.”

Over many years, Jefferson County Planning Director Walter Eschbach, formerly with St. Louis County Department of Planning, and William C. Schock of the Open Space Council for the St. Louis Region both recognized the abuse and threats to the river while also appreciating its natural qualities and recreation potential. (Schock, a prominent St. Louis attorney and life-long river advocate, would go on to become one of the founders of Operation Clean Stream, a project that would spawn a rebirth of the river under the sponsorship of the Open Space Council for the St. Louis Region.)

As an outgrowth of the dream of a National Recreation area on the lower Meramec, a later study authorized and funded by Congress and coordinated by the Department of Interior in the early 1970s with active participation from the State of Missouri, local governments and interested citizens entitled “The Meramec Concept” highlighted both the positive benefits and degradation of the river corridor. According to Ben Knox, retired from St. Louis County Parks and now with the Meramec Greenway, the study concluded that “…parts of the Meramec have been severely abused and misused. Each year the deterioration of the riverscape becomes more acute, and indications are that without proper action this process will result in even more serious impacts on the river environment.” The study was like a shot over the bow of a sinking ship. The Meramec environment was going down fast and something had to be done soon.

THE RENAISSANCE BEGINS: THE GREENWAY VISION

In a report entitled “The Lower Meramec Valley, The Open Space Council and You,” Walter Eschbach of the St. Louis County Department of Planning wrote the following introduction: “If man is to continue to live upon the earth, he must respect the land. How can we respect the land when we know nothing of it? How can we live by the rules of nature when all around us are increasing amounts of asphalt, concrete and steel. There is a reawakening of people to the natural world, to the beauty to be found in natural materials in their natural state. It is for these reasons that we look to the Lower Meramec. The Lower Meramec River is an expression of the character and beauty to be found in the land itself. It is worth saving!”

In 1964 Al Kahn and Walter Eschbach of the St. Louis County Department of Planning unveiled a bold plan, “The Challenge of Growth,” which called for the acquisition of 5,000 acres of land for 24 major parks in St. Louis County at an estimated cost of $25 million, suggesting that the lower Meramec River in St. Louis and Jefferson Counties become an urban greenbelt.

In 1965 the Open Space Council for the St. Louis Region (OSC) was founded and incorporated in the State of Missouri as a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit with the mission of “conserving open space for public benefit and enjoyment.” Recognizing the reality of diminishing open space and threats to our region’s natural beauty, a group of dedicated civic leaders, conservationists and environmentalist gathered to form the first land trust organization of its kind in the region. The original incorporators included Davis Biggs Sr., Barney Schubel and Leo Drey. A board of 38 directors was soon appointed with Leo Drey elected as president. One of the immediate orders of business by OSC grew out of a motion by board member Walston Chubb (with a second by Ethan
Shepley) to make the lower Meramec River among its first land acquisition priorities.

In 1967 the Open Space Foundation was formed (with support from OSC) to accept tax-exempt donations. The two groups worked hand-in-hand with local, county, state and federal agencies to raise funds to preserve land along the lower Meramec River. In the spring of 1967, OSC worked vigorously for the passage of a $25 million dollar bond issue for new parkland; however the proposition failed to achieve the requisite two-thirds majority by 376 votes out of 76,854 cast. Although disappointing, this narrow ballot defeat did not discourage the resolute interest to conserve land along the Meramec.

In a day when the concept of urban parks and recreation was relatively new, a strongly committed and innovative public and private partnership evolved. Although the early parks bond issue failure was a setback, it did not discourage OSC from pursuing its mission of conserving open space. According to Leo Drey, this mission was best articulated by OSC director Walston Chubb: “Our mission is to preserve open land in the St. Louis metropolitan region for the pleasure of this and future generations.” Since that time the Open Space Council and Foundation have assisted in the raising of hundreds of thousands of matching private dollars for the acquisition Bee Tree County Park and Castlewood State Park, both of which are located along the Meramec River. OSC and the Foundation were also key in brokering other land deals and working for the passage of successful bond issues for parks in St. Louis County in 1969 and 1977. Since its founding, the Open Space Council has remained faithful to its mission and has been influential in many other Meramec transactions. Today, thousands of acres of public land border the Meramec. The Meramec River Greenway is generally considered to cover the lower 108 miles of the river from Meramec State Park near Sullivan to the confluence with the Mississippi River just south of St. Louis.

During the late 1960’s and 1970’s, people’s attitude about the environment and the river were changing as private concern about the Meramec River evolved into public action. Coupled with the desire to acquire more open space along the lower river, the public began to return to the Meramec.

**THE GOAL OF A CLEANER RIVER: OPERATION CLEAN STREAM**

In 1967 Operation Clean Stream was conceived by members of the Open Space Council to get people down to the river to see just how bad things were. William Schock, a St. Louis attorney, and Al Foster, a publicist and free lance writer, promoted the idea of a massive community river clean-up. Bumper stickers proclaimed, “Keep Our Rivers Clean,” and public interest grew. Various groups put out the call for workers and equipment. The Meramec River Canoe Club, which had a clubhouse in what is now Kirkwood’s Greentree Park, called for volunteers. So did Missouri Sportsmen for a Clean Outdoors who had a dedicated core of people who enjoyed conducting river and lake clean-ups on weekends. The first annual Operation Clean Steam became a reality in 1967, and that ritual has continued for over 40 plus years. In addition to increasing public awareness of the abuses of the lower Meramec, Operation Clean Stream provides a hands-on approach for individuals to get “down and dirty” as they contribute their personal efforts to improve a much loved river resource.

Specifically, on Saturday, August 24, 1967, the spirit of cooperation prevailed as much community and corporate support came forward to assist with one the nation’s first comprehensive river stewardship projects. From the City of Pacific down river to the Kirkwood Water Works in what is today Greentree Park, about 100 volunteers joined forces to clean up the Meramec. Diverse
groups such as Boy Scouts of America, the Sierra Club, the Junior League and the Missouri Department of Conservation came together to pool their efforts.

The old Falstaff Brewing Company, one of the first corporate event sponsors, provided funding which helped with everything from publicity to refreshments. In a pre-event letter designed to promote the project, Meramec River Canoe Club President Al Beletz referred to Operation Clean Stream as the first “Conservation Clean Up and Beer Party.” As the sun was setting on that summer afternoon, the first generation of “Clean Streamers” gathered at Steiny’s Inn near Times Beach (Now Route 66 State Park) to enjoy some cold beverages, share trashy stories and plan for the second annual Operation Clean Stream.

For over forty years, the fourth Saturday in August has brought thousands of volunteers to the river for a day of hard work and volunteerism as they work side by side to continue the mission of Operation Clean Stream. The OCS project has been not only been about removing decades of unsightly litter and debris from the river banks, but once again getting the public to embrace the Meramec as a regional conservation and outdoor recreation resource for the St. Louis area. After 40 years the message of Operation Clean Stream is still the same: “Keep Our Rivers Clean”.

**THE UPPER AND LOWER MERAMEC A RIVER DIVIDED**

The late 1960’s and early 1970’s brought many ideas and a new vision for the lower Meramec’s restoration. However, the plans for the 23,000-acre Meramec Lake on the upper river were still being promoted by the Meramec Basin Association headed up by St. Louis attorney James Gamble. The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers was moving ahead full steam: acquiring land for the lake, site testing, preparing working drawings, letting contracts and starting some early construction.

In 1968 and 1969, much debate centered around a highly controversial “Scenic Rivers Bill,” a measure that would provide unified management for the river from near its source to its confluence with the Mississippi River. Eventually the idea was rejected due to many voiced concerns about private property intrusions. In his book *Passages of a Stream: A Chronicle of the Meramec*, Jim Jackson offers another point of view. Jackson believes that the idea was rejected because it conflicted directly with Corps of Engineers’ plans for severing the upper portion of the river with a dam and reservoir. According to Jackson, six
years later in 1975, a Bureau of Outdoor Recreation planning grant helped to revive the interest in a Meramec River Recreation Area on the lower river much like the 1967 dual county study for a proposed National Recreation Area. The concept gained widespread support in political circles because it did not impinge on Corp plans.

Jackson suggests that then Missouri Governor Christopher Bond picked up on a recommendation that all lower Meramec restoration efforts, to have any chance of succeeding, would require close cooperation among municipal, county, state and private interest. It was observed that there were simply too many potential conflicts to do otherwise. Thus, in September, 1975, Governor Bond designated the 108-mile stretch on the middle and lower Meramec River below Meramec State Park as the Meramec River Recreation Area (MRRA), and he appointed a steering committee to coordinate future planning.

“The Meramec Concept” report called for all governments with jurisdictions along the Meramec River to participate. Initially the MRRA committee consisted of representatives from the State of Missouri, three counties, and nine cities with bordering jurisdiction along the river. Bond also appointed a few citizens representing the private sector. Duties of MRRA members included monitoring new development proposals, master planning for recreation, fund development and educating the public about the many positive benefits of the lower Meramec. The group met on a regular basis at different venues in the greenway.

Under the leadership of Susan Sedgewick and Ben Knox of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation, MRRA prospered for well over a decade. During Sedgewick’s tenure as MRRA Executive Director (along with her many other County Park duties) numerous events were held to bring people back to the river. Two hugely successful events included The Great Meramec River Raft Float, held annually from 1976 to 1983. The event included food, music, a raft decorating contest and much riverfront rowdiness. It became so successful and out of control at times that it had to be cancelled. It seems that sometimes even lots of available river water does not dilute the ill effects of alcohol.

The annual Executive Float was another event designed to get business and civic leaders out on the river in order to expose them to this wonderful community asset. This by-invitation-only event included such activities as short float trips, hikes, conservation talks, picnic lunches and various contests and games. Often local celebrities attended and one year helicopter rides were given by noted St. Louis radio air traffic pilot Alan Barklage, who was killed in a plane crash several years later.

In addition to elevating public awareness about the river’s many attributes, MRRA along with its partnering agencies and organizations, continued to actively promote planning and land acquisition in the greenway. Properties acquired for public use would remain in local, county or state jurisdictional ownership rather than under a single ownership. Thus teamwork within the Greenway is essential, with the Greenway Coordinating Committee designated to seek uniformity of design and coordination of management. Planning efforts by the Greenway Coordinating Committee have, through the years, identified properties for public acquisition. Reasons for these additions include connectivity, protection of outstanding natural and historical features, protection of the river bank and scenic vistas, land needed for active recreational opportunities (such as athletic fields, golf courses, fishing and boating access) and restoration of degraded areas. The vast majority of lands in the greenway, however, will remain in private ownership. Privately operated recreational facilities such as athletic complexes, golf courses, equestrian operations, canoe liveries and campgrounds have increased in recent years, and these compliment the overall “Greenway Concept.” Agricultural and
forestry practices also continue, but mostly on the upper and middle Meramec and its tributaries.

**STOPPING A DAM: SAVING A RIVER**

While greenway plans and new park acquisitions were being considered on the lower Meramec during the 1970’s, the plans for a Meramec Lake continued. As an outgrowth of decades of planning, surveys and proposals related to flood control, recreation, and development, congressional authorizations were going forward by the Corps of Engineers and being pushed by flat water advocates. In 1968, the Corps started purchasing land, and the dam project was underway without any foreseeable obstacles.

However, public opinion against the reservoir was mounting. In came a new era of environmentalism and distrust of big government bureaucracy. Three years after land acquisition started for property surrounding the impoundment, opposition surfaced in the form of the Missouri Coalition for the Environment and the Ozark Chapter of the Sierra Club. These groups challenged the eight-page, triple-spaced Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared by the Corps of Engineers as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. It became apparent in the ranks of opponents that such a flimsy evaluation of an area with so much natural diversity was totally inadequate. Recognizing that there may still be hope to stop the dam, opposition to the project grew as new groups and new leaders emerged. A 1972 lawsuit filed by the Ozark Chapter of the Sierra Club and three landowners against the Corps of Engineers set off a series of extended legal battles challenging the Corps on various plans and studies.

“How to Stop a Dam,” a chapter in Jim Jackson’s book *Passages of a Stream*, highlights the cast of characters who came forward in the face of overwhelming odds. Jerry Sugerman is a capable leader who poured his heart and soul into tirelessly working to halt the project. Local folks like Robert Thomas and Emmett Schlueter, leaders of the Citizens Committee to Save the Meramec, and cave experts like the late Don Rimbach and Lester Dill (owner of Onondaga Cave) made compelling arguments about how the proposed lake would inundate this natural wonder. Rimbach also made a case for how other caves located in the area of the earthen dam would cause leaks and have a bearing on its structural stability.5

Jackson goes on to highlight how area river advocates like Duane Woltjen of the Sierra Club, Emmett Schlueter of the Citizens Committee and Robert Hyer representing Onondaga traveled to Washington, D.C. at the invitation of Congressman James Symington. There they testified against further funding for the project. Although political support remained firm for the dam proponents, there were early signs that the tide against the dam was turning. The political winds were changing. Newly-elected President Jimmy Carter had campaigned against federal dam projects. Then-freshman Senator John Danforth had served as Missouri Attorney General in 1972 when the Sierra Club filed its lawsuit and upheld the plaintiffs’ complaint that the Corps Environmental Impact statement was not adequate. Joe Teasdale had defeated incumbent Christopher Bond for governor in 1976. Missouri’s senior Senator Tom Eagleton, who served on the Senate Appropriations Committee, stated that he could no longer support funding for the dam without an affirmative public referendum because cost for the project had leaped from an estimated $38 million in 1966 to $124 million in 1977.6

Both the Conservation Federation of Missouri and the Missouri Department of Conservation eventually came out in opposition to the dam. Other conservation and environmental groups did the same. The dam project faced budget delays by the new Carter administration. At
an area Sierra Club meeting in 1976, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nathaniel Reed claimed that the project was a “luxury recreation boondoggle.” Public polls were starting to indicate strong opposition to the dam. On June 4, 1978, the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, declared opposition to the dam in one of the longest editorials ever published by them. James Gamble, Executive Director of the Meramec Basin Association, the U.S. Corps of Engineers and various supporters continued to justify the need for the dam. It was clear that citizens were divided. To avoid further delays, the Missouri legislature, who had earlier scraped the referendum idea, now had to act. It ultimately authorized a nonbinding referendum to be held within twelve counties of the Meramec basin and the city of St. Louis to test the waters of support for the measure.

In the election held on August 8, 1978, sixty-four percent (64%) of the voters said that they wanted the Meramec River to remain a free-flowing stream. This sent a startling message to officials in Washington about an already authorized dam project that would have impounded the river and flooded over 23,000 acres of beautiful Missouri landscape rich in natural diversity. The issue had generated fierce controversy on both sides, but ultimately, public opinion galvanized around keeping the Meramec free.

This was one of the few times in history that the public had a way to voice its opinion on a project for which some of the land had been acquired and construction had already begun. The voters’ loud “no” set the stage for de-authorization. Three years later President Ronald Regan signed the bill into law on December 29, 1981. In the wake of the project closure, there was much debate about what to do with the land already acquired. It was decided that 80% of the property would be offered for sale to private parties with previous title holders to get a first option to buy back their land. The balance of the land with the highest natural value would be retained for public use by the state of Missouri along with a riverfront conservation easement.

Thousands of acres of public land border the Meramec River today. Following the 1981 Meramec Lake de-authorization, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources created Onondaga Cave State Park near Leasburg. Onondaga Cave, located within the park, has been designated a National Landmark. Vilander Bluffs, the tallest and most spectacular bluffs along the river, are now protected within Onondaga Cave State Park. Meramec State Park near Sullivan assures the protection of the 90-foot-tall riverside entrance to Green’s Cave. In addition, the 6,222-acre Huzzah Conservation Area, also near Leasburg and
managed by the Missouri Department of Conservation, offers an abundance of camping, fishing, hunting and hiking opportunities. The Department’s managed access points make the river inviting and available to all visitors.

Just a short distance from the doorsteps of millions of Missourians, the watershed of the main stream of the Meramec has become a backyard playground accommodating a wide variety of outdoor recreation pursuits and offering tens of thousands of acres of healthy habitat for fish and wildlife. We can only speculate on how the culture and economics of the upper watershed would have changed had the dam been built. We know, however, that more than 33 miles of the Meramec and its tributaries would have been under water, displacing families that owned or farmed the land for generations. Hundreds of scenic and geologically significant caves and springs would have been fully or partially flooded. Valuable habitat would have been lost, and a number of species of bats, crayfish and freshwater mussels might have disappeared from the planet forever as a result.

A dam was stopped. A river was saved. We have much to be grateful for and many to thank for helping to preserve the Meramec as a free flowing river for us and future generations.

FROM A VISION TO REALITY: A RIVER IN RENAISSANCE

In 1975 there were thirteen individual lands in public ownership in the Meramec Greenway, and several of these had only recently been acquired and were not yet open to public use. Today in 2009, there are more than 45 areas that total over 30,000 acres. These include parks and conservation areas, as well as semi-public lands such as the Shaw Reserve and the Wild Canid Research and Survival Center. Within them there is a wide spectrum of features, from the active recreational facilities in Arnold, Fenton, Wildwood and Kirkwood City Parks to Meramec State Park’s Copper Hollow Natural Area, a high quality wilderness accessible only by a hiking trail.

The permanent protection of some of the Meramec River’s most significant natural wonders has created an emerging greenway rich in conservation and outdoor recreation benefit. Today nearly 30,000 acres of public land are in place on the lower 108 miles of the Meramec River. Largely because of private and public cooperation, the concept conceived over forty years ago of a greenway on the lower Meramec River is now on the brink of national significance as a model greenway project.

A FUTURE GREENWAY VISION

With the establishment of a governmental infrastructure and some level of funding, future progress on the Lower Meramec River should continue. Progress may not move at the desired pace and compromises will be necessary, but history is playing itself out. The greenway will eventually emerge on the Lower Meramec. Litter, water quality, landfills, stubborn landowners, outdoor ethics and new development will continue to present challenges. Nevertheless, it is imperative that we remain vigilant and that we persevere to fulfill the vision of the Meramec River Greenway.

Time and funding are major determining factors related to closing the gap between the upper greenway and the lower greenway. Maybe someday Franklin and Jefferson County officials will recognize the progress of GRGD and attempt to join the district. The economic collapse of 2008 might bring more desirable greenway properties to the market place at a realistic asking price. Landowners and greenway proponents may be able to coexist in an environment that will allow the lower and upper greenway to be joined between Mile Maker 108 and the confluence as one unit of conservation, educational and outdoor recreation diversity.
We are encouraged by early signs of further progress. Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) have been defined on the lower and middle Meramec. Initiatives such as the Source Drinking Water Protection Program grew out of a 2005 Meramec Basin Summit sponsored by the Meramec River Tributaries Alliance (MRTA). New Ozark Trail segments inch their way towards Meramec State Park from Arkansas. Perhaps the trail will continue toward St. Louis along the Meramec River. Such a merger would give Missouri a nationally significant long-distance hiking and biking trail. We hope these and other projects will enjoy some of the same miracles and milestones that spawned the greenway on the lower end of the Meramec.
Friends and Funding: Miracles and Milestones

The miracles of the Meramec directly resulted from the “Miracle Workers”—the visionary leaders who recognized the many natural and outdoor recreation benefits of a river almost lost to benign neglect and incompatible development. These people came back to the river in great numbers to perform their miracles, many of which unfolded far from the river’s edge in places like Jefferson City or Washington D.C. Who were these “Miracle Workers”? What inspired and motivated them?

It would be difficult for any one person or organization to lay claim to saving a river and creating an extensive greenway like we enjoy on the Meramec River today. Miracle workers from all walks of life contributed in their own special ways to protect and restore this natural wonder flowing east out of the northern Ozarks to its confluence with the mighty Mississippi. While impossible to mention everyone by name, they included river lovers, canoeists, fishermen, farmers, hunters, hikers, landowners, picnickers and water enthusiasts. Thousands of annual volunteers from service clubs, churches, scouting groups, military units and utility companies offered their time, talent and resources to ongoing endeavors like Operation Clean Stream and the Missouri Stream Team programs. These valued miracle workers return to the river daily, monthly or annually to give back to the river by their individual endeavors.

Miracle workers also include advocates, activists, attorneys, businessmen, corporate leaders, municipal planners, park people, conservationists, biologists, educators, environmentalists, philanthropists, news reporters, politicians, and elected officials. In addition, cities, counties, regional agencies, state organizations and federal affiliates worked collectively to make big miracles become a reality. Depending on their individual and collective talents and expertise, they raised public awareness, planned a new greenway project, defended the river in court, participated in a scientific study, educated the community, funded a post-flood buyout, developed a grant, acquired a new conservation area, built a trail, worked to pass new laws or inspired others to be good river stewards. These miracle workers, whether by a one-time effort or a perpetual commitment, made a lasting difference in the rebirth of the Meramec River and the Meramec greenway.

“Milestones” date back to the mid-1960’s when the idea of conserving land along the Meramec River as a greenway was first conceived (although reference to the term greenway did not gain acceptance in Missouri until about twenty years later). From 1965 to the present day, many milestones have contributed to the Meramec River Greenway emerging as we know it: premier conservation, outdoor recreation and scenic resource to the St. Louis Metropolitan region.

The September 2003 St. Louis County Meramec River Greenway Concept Plan was prepared by the staff of St. Louis County Department of Planning and the Department of Parks and Recreation for incorporation into the County’s General plan in order to clarify the full extent of the vision for the Meramec Greenway and affirm St. Louis County’s commitment to that vision. The chronology of events listed in the plan, along with some of the following additional external forces, spanned the Greenway’s nearly forty-five year history. Decade by decade these milestones embedded themselves into the ebb and flow of the river’s current.
The Planning Milestones

In 1965, the first of many plans, *The Challenge of Growth: A Study of Major County and Regional Park Needs*, made the Lower Meramec a priority and called for a unified 10,000-acre greenbelt. Two years later a plan which called for a National Recreation Area on the Lower Meramec River further accentuated the corridor’s enormous recreational potential. Many other plans reinforced the Greenway’s attributes and needs. Major planning documents included: *The Meramec Concept: A Progress Report* (1975); *Lower Meramec River Management Study* (1980); *Recreation Spaces Community Places* (1982-2000); *Lower Meramec River Greenway Study* (1982); *Water Quality Management* (1984); *The Henry Shaw Ozark Corridor Study* (1995); *Lower Meramec Linear Park Master Plan* (1999); *Blueprint for the Future: Sixth District Community Area Study* (2000); and the *Strategic Plan of the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation* (2000). More plans for the greenway were prepared by the various municipal governments on how the greenway could become a community asset.

Designation and Incorporation Milestones

In 1975 the Lower 108 miles of the Meramec River was designated by Governor Christopher Bond as The Meramec River Recreation Area (MRRA) and shortly thereafter the MRRA articles of incorporation were filed by St. Louis Attorney and Open Space Council board member, Peter Schmitz. Thus, MRRA became an official 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit organization. Over the next 30-plus years the Meramec would enjoy the benefit of development coordination by an official coordinating body and professional oversight by outstanding St. Louis County Parks and Recreation Department staff members including Susan Sedgewick, Ben Knox and Dennis Hogan—each of whom was dedicated to greenway progress.

Funding and Acquisition Milestones

Early public/private partnerships such as those forged between St. Louis County Parks, the State of Missouri, the Open Space Council and the Open Space Foundation in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s led to some of the first major parks acquisitions for sites like Bee Tree County Park and Castlewood State Park. For example, $750,000 in private matching funds were raised by the Open Space Council/Foundation for the purchase of 1100 acres near Castlewood. Other significant properties such as George Winter Park near Fenton and Bellview Farms in Sherman were donated respectively by the Winter family and by Hal
Donnelly to the Open Space Council.

In the subsequent years, St. Louis County passed three bond issues with millions of dollars going to land acquisition and park development on the Lower Meramec. Federal and state matching funds were made available by the Department of Interior, National Park Service and Missouri Department of Natural Resources partnering programs such as the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR), Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS) and the Landmarks Park program.

New sources of funds from the Design for Conservation 1/8 % conservation sales tax passed by Missouri voters in 1976 and the 1/10% Parks and Soils Tax first passed by a vote in 1984 began to supplement local, county and private funding efforts. Revenue from both taxes contributed to more land acquisition, improved access and better management of fish, wildlife and habitat on the river. Other funding for new parks, recreation and trail facilities in the greenway came from municipalities located along the lower river.

**Stopping A Dam and Saving A River Milestone**

Though discussed earlier in this article, the Meramec Dam deserves a great deal more attention than several paragraphs. Many writers documented the finer points of the campaign that stopped the dam project. To learn the full story of one of the most amazing citizen-led conservation initiatives in our state’s history, read James P. Jackson's book, *Passages of a Stream* (University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1984).

The story of a river almost lost and its rebirth is fascinating tale of miracles and milestones. On August 8, 1978, the Meramec River Greenway benefited greatly when citizens in eastern Missouri voted to pass a nonbinding, 12-county referendum to keep the Meramec River and two of its tributaries, the Big and Bourbeuse Rivers, as free-flowing streams. The outcome of the referendum and the project de-authorization in 1981 led to many acres of new conservation and park lands on the upper reaches of the greenway and protected the river’s natural diversity and unique natural wonders. Although some bad blood and hard feelings linger over the disposition of acquired lands for the proposed Meramec Lake, the linear and natural qualities of the Meramec remain unified. Terry Whaley, a former chairman of the Meramec River Recreation Association, spent a week in 1994 on a media-float trip. Whaley commented, “Cities everywhere are pushing for a renaissance of their rivers, and there may be no better example than the Meramec River.”

**Flooding and Buyout Milestones**

Some old timers believe that the Meramec River will experience a significant flooding event about every ten years. The major floods of 1973, 1979, 1982, 1993 and 2008 took their toll on streamside developments that have put man in harm’s way. In 1982, under Section 1362 of the National Flood Insurance Act, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in cooperation with local and county jurisdictions started one the first major buy-out programs on the Lower Meramec River. FEMA appropriated three million dollars to remove flood damaged structures and return the land to a natural state in St. Louis and Jefferson Counties, as well as in cities like Arnold, Fenton, Kirkwood and Valley Park. Subsequent buy-outs allowed for the removal of thousands of flood-prone homes and the acquisition of additional land to the greenway.

One of the more controversial such buy-outs involved the town of Times Beach after the flood of 1982. Flood damage, however, was not the only issue. Dioxin, a highly toxic substance,
was discovered on streets and properties of the riverside town. Consequently, Times Beach was designated as a “Super-Fund” site by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). For over a decade from 1982 into the mid-1990’s, Super Fund monies were used to buy out over 2,000 residents and incinerate the poisoned soils. When the 417-acre site was finally given a clean bill of health, it became Route 66 State Park, one of the newer and larger additions to the greenway.

The flood of 2008 not only tested a newly completed levee in Valley Park, but it also tested the will of the people to remain as permanent residents of floodplain towns like Pacific, Eureka, Wildwood, Valley Park, Kirkwood, Fenton, and Arnold. In the latest round of FEMA buy-outs, many residents will choose to move to higher ground. As a result, more open space likely will be incorporated into the greenway.

After over thirty years of stewardship-related activity along the Meramec, the greenway concept is creating a natural alternative to costly structural and highly invasive approaches such as dams and levees. For the first time in decades we are beginning to see more tree-tops than roof-tops.

Environmental Milestones

The first Earth Day held in 1972 was an indirect milestone, as was the backlash from the Vietnam Era. People began to change their attitudes about the environment and about government. Conservation, environmental stewardship, parks and recreation were becoming an important part of our culture. Citizens once again began to value their natural resources. Interest in restoring the Meramec as a greenway emerged at this opportune time.

Clean water is essential to the Meramec River Greenway. The passage of the Clean Water Act, as well as improvements to reduce sedimentation, point and non-point pollution waste treatment improvements, storm-water control measures, source drinking water protection and improved zoning regulations, all contributed to direct environmental milestones which benefitted the Meramec River. The completion of four Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District plants in the 1980’s, the building of new regional treatment facilities, and the elimination of in-channel sand and gravel extraction all helped to preserve a fishable and swimmable Lower Meramec.

The Great Rivers Greenway District Milestone

After years of public support, numerous studies and millions in appropriations, grants and donations, the Lower Meramec—along with other worthy greenway projects in the region—might finally derive a stable funding source to expand a vision that began four decades earlier. In 1996, the Danforth Foundation and other civic partners appointed a Parks and Open Space Task Force as a part of the 2004 St. Louis program designed to improve the quality of life in the region. People from different sectors of the community and representing various disciplines gathered to develop a bold plan for open space in the Metropolitan St. Louis Region, including cities and counties in both Illinois and Missouri. It was hoped that this bi-state process would result in a network of linear parks and multi-use trails with a focus on greenway opportunities associated with our region’s rivers and streams. Ultimately, after years of meetings, the engagement process resulted in “Proposition C” which created an overlay district funded by a one-tenth of one-cent sales tax. In the spring of 1999, enabling legislation was passed to allow the districts to be created in both states and function in cities and counties where the proposition was voted on and approved by citizens. Ultimately, the governor of Illinois and the governor of Missouri met over the middle of the Mississippi River on the Chain of Rocks Bridge where they signed the bill which proposed a new agency, the Metropolitan Park
and Recreation District (MPRD). Under the banner of the Clean Water, Safe Parks and Community Trails Initiative, “Proposition C” won voters’ support in November of 2000. The tax was projected to raise $20 million annually. In 2003 MPRD changed its name to the Great Rivers Greenway District (GRGD). As its first Executive Director, the district employed David Fisher, a highly qualified parks professional. GRGD also appointed a board of capable directors and hired staff to set about the work of developing an interconnected system of greenways, parks and trails.

In 2001, shortly after the creation of the district, The Meramec Recreation Association presented MPRD with an updated Meramec River Master Plan that laid out land acquisition and development priorities for new parks, trails and open space in the Meramec River Greenway. The district conceptually endorsed the plan and started appropriating funds for new projects on the Lower Meramec. In cooperation with MRRA, St. Louis County and municipal partners, GRGD has aggressively assisted in the purchase of new open space and the development of many miles of new trail. It is obvious that GRGD has respected the leadership and goals of the many people that made the Lower Meramec River Greenway a reality.
Endnotes
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About the Author

Ron Coleman has over 38 years experience in conservation, environmental projects, parks and recreation, and trails in Missouri. He currently serves as the Executive Director of the Open Space Council for the St. Louis Region.

A veteran of the United States Marine Corp, Mr. Coleman holds an M.S. degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia. His professional and volunteer work with land and water conservation has earned local, state and national recognition. He was recognized as a Missouri Water Conservationist of the Year for his leadership in the restoration of the Meramec River Basin and for his involvement in parks management he has received a Missouri Parks and Recreation Fellow Award, the highest form of professional recognition in his field. He was named the Conservationist of the Year by the St. Louis Audubon Society in 2004 and was honored as the Missouri Conservationist of the Year in 2005 by the Conservation Federation of Missouri.
Chapter 6
“Street Improvements:”
A Way to Think about Infrastructure

Even though J. Charless Cabanne and the rest of the Streets Improvement committee remarked in the first sentence of their report that “the street plan is the element of first and greatest importance in the making and remaking of a city,” the word that they probably would have used today instead of streets would be infrastructure. Indeed, while streets are their main focus, they talk at length about the riverfront, urban design, mass transit, utilities—all of the non-building elements of our physical world that we collectively call infrastructure. What is the most remarkable is that many of the same issues that our authors discuss are many of the same concerns of Cabanne and the committee. What is important to them is utility or convenience, cost, attractiveness, whether or not it is developed according to some kind of scheme or rationale—even accessibility. In short, while they were speaking of streets when they remark that “they can serve [merely] the purpose of travel and remain ugly and unadorned, or they can be made to promote the health and comfort of the people and add to the dignity and splendor of the entire city,” Cabanne and his colleagues captured the essence of a manner of thinking of infrastructure that is useful now as it was a hundred years ago.

Speaking of how things never change, the first topic which the committee raised was not streets, but the state of the city’s riverfront. Actually, this is not all that surprising the 1907 planners were faced with the same dilemma concerning the riverfront as regional planners are today. Then as now, St. Louis planners must somehow reconcile that the Mississippi is a natural wonder, as well as, the region’s commercial reason for existence. Just how do you juggle the needs of riverboats, the railroads, and now automotive traffic? But for Cabanne, it was not a zero-sum problem. In his mind, the riverfront could be made more aesthetically pleasing while making it more commercially viable. Basically, his idea was to extend the bluff out towards the river so that the underneath of the extension could be used for new freight and warehouse facilities accessible to both river and rail traffic, while the top side of the extension would provide an esplanade between the Eads Bridge and the planned Poplar Street rail bridge (the present MacArthur Bridge) that would have an uninterrupted view of the river. The most distinctive feature of the plan was a terrace down to the riverfront similar in design to that of Tangiers. Even though it could be argued that the design of the plan left much to be desired, what is instructive is that the 1907 planners did not believe that infrastructure could only be utilitarian. Rather, they hinted at how infrastructure could be both commercially viable and attractive at the same time.

The committee treated the streets in much the same fashion. They wanted to make the city streets both more efficient functionally and at the same time making them attractive and convenient. In their minds, there was relatively little that could be done with the city’s streets east of Twelfth Street (Tucker), but did believe that by taking the streetcars off Locust they could transform it into “the Fifth Avenue of St. Louis” and Twelfth Street itself “in time it will be the heart of the retail district.” But the boldest element of the major street plan was for Chestnut. Concerned with the impression that travelers had of the city traveling from the magnificent new Union Station through a slum to the downtown, Cabanne and the committee proposed widening Chestnut from Eighteenth Street to Twelfth making it a distinguish boulevard that they likened to the Champs Elysees in Paris. The idea eventually was to extend this boulevard westward to Grand and to acquire much of the
deteriorated property around the station. Again, while St. Louisans have the idea that nothing has ever come of plans prepared for the city, this concept was the foundation of the Central Arterial that came to be.

Utilities were also a major concern for the committee. With the advent of the electrical revolution and the invention of the telephone, the city was pockmarked with utility lines running along city streets. What made this jumble of overhead wires even more unsightly were the omnipresent street car lines that the street car lines were feverishly putting up to complete the electrification of the streetcar. While the committee was mostly concerned with aesthetics, they were also mindful of long-term utility. Not surprisingly, the committee recommended extending the underground district where burying utility lines was mandated by ordinance. What is significant, though, is that the committee noted that while it was cheaper for individual companies to bury their own lines, over the long term due to the need for regular maintenance, it was financially more expedient to spend more effort and money to build conduits which would hold multiple lines and which could be accessed more readily in the future. One wonders if this is not a concept that continues to have merit a hundred years later.

One area that the committee might have gotten wrong was in terms of mass transit. While they made a number of recommendations concerning rerouting certain lines to make them more accessible for riders and had interesting ideas for making the streetcars more attractive and quieter, they seem to have been dead-set against burying streetcar lines, even though burying utility lines was a good idea. “The underground trolley,” Cabanne argued, “judging from the recommendations of numerous engineers and the Royal Commission of Great Britain, has not proven satisfactory to warrant its grand adoption.” Again, one has to wonder what mass transit in St. Louis would have been like a hundred years later if Cabanne and his cohorts had decided otherwise.

Yet from the perspective of a time when the region is plagued with sprawl and the needless duplication of infrastructure services, it would seem that Cabanne had volumes to say to present-day St. Louisans when he remarked “a city can no longer be considered as a mere aggregation of separate buildings erected solely for the convenience of the owner.” Although he was only talking about the need to direct the platting of new sub-divisions in the city—as well as—adjacent suburbs that he assumed would one day be part of the city—he was really articulating the grand vision of the 1907 plan itself. “The city,” Cabanne explained, “is a great organism with closely related parts. Consequently, its growth must be directed and shaped.”

In modernizing this chapter for the 21st century, infrastructure was clearly the topic of choice. This chapter takes us into some different directions, though. There is no discussion here of interstate highways, bridges, or airports. While important, those are subjects that are addressed well in other places. A conscious choice was made to address parts of infrastructure that are equally important as those classic concepts, but that bring out newer issues that will require regional leaders to think in new directions or address needs with new approaches.

Thomas Shrout begins the chapter with a new perspective on a familiar issue. Mass transit is certainly a concept that the region did well a century ago, but that fell out of favor in the post-World War II era, but has enjoyed a regional resurgence in the last ten years. Shrout gives the interesting history of mass transit in the region, and brings out the love-hate relationship with which mass transit must live in today’s region. To be certain, the region has invested heavily in development of mass transit and MetroLink. Light rail has enjoyed increasing usage from discretionary riders, says Shrout. However, lawsuits over the Cross-County extension and construction delays led to distrust among the citizenry. Failure of Proposition M in 2008 meant that the transit agency lost millions
in operating revenue and that drastic cost-cutting measures were required. Was this really a failure in confidence among the voters? Perhaps, as Shrouth suggests, it points to a failure of the way the region finances its transit operations and of planning. Shrouth’s essay is a call to action for civic leaders and planners alike to modernize not only how the region finances mass transit, but how the integrates transit into sustainable living as well.

Richard Mark examines a part of regional infrastructure that is only going to grow in significance in the coming generation—energy. The region’s energy grid is faced with a myriad of challenges, and Mark lays them out forthright. Climate change calls for a major shift in the way urban centers meet their energy needs, and St. Louis is no exception. The future, notes Mark, is in renewable energy sources. The discussion must be about more than just making power. It is also about delivering power, using power more efficiently, and addressing aging infrastructure—all while minimizing the externalities associated with all of those steps in the process. Energy generation and consumption is a vital topic in the modern discussion of infrastructure and Mark identifies these critical issues (on both sides of the river) that regional leaders must address.

One of the most significant aspects of infrastructure is its maintenance. Often, the region is good about building infrastructure but not as good about maintaining it. Many components of vital infrastructure are aging rapidly. Alan Ortbals tells the story of the levee system in southern Illinois that was on the verge of decertification. There are pockets of the St. Louis region along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers that are developed on low ground—susceptible to flooding and therefore protected with levees. In the great American Bottom, the Mississippi’s floodplain that extends from the Alton area far south through Madison and St. Clair Counties and beyond, a series of levees dating back more than a half-century hold back the river from homes and businesses. When the protective quality of the aging infrastructure was on the verge of losing the confidence of federal officials, leaders at all levels of government came together to address the problem. It was a fantastic example of cooperation across jurisdictions and the recognition that the region was, almost literally, “all in the same boat.”

Colonel Stanley Brown (USA, ret.) concludes the chapter with an assessment of how the region is doing with issues of accessibility and accommodation. The Americans with Disabilities Act is well into its second decade of existence and enforcement, but the country (and the region) still struggles with making facilities accessible, accommodating those with special needs, financing improvements, and adjusting attitudes. Brown presents here a very thoughtful and detailed analysis about the need for accessibility, the capacity to deliver services, and the policy challenges facing leaders. Infrastructure is only as good as its ability to serve the people who need it—all the people. Echoing Cabanne’s statement that “so whatever improves their convenience and enhances their attractiveness will greatly aid in making St. Louis the city which every citizen wishes it to be,” Brown’s essay lends an important and vital voice to the discussion of how St. Louis should think about infrastructure.
THE IMPORTANCE OF MASS TRANSIT
Thomas R. Shrout, Jr.

In some respects, the history of transit in St. Louis is like the movie “Mutiny on the Bounty:” every 20 years or so a new version comes out, but the story remains much the same with each reiteration. The plot raises the question of how the transit system can best serve the St. Louis region and where the money will come from to provide the service. The hardships and cutbacks at Metro in the spring of 2009 are not all that dissimilar to those the private transit companies faced in St. Louis in the great depression when they almost went bankrupt for expanding too fast. The plot was not resolved in 1932, nor was it in 2009.

Metro can trace its roots to 1843 when a true transit system, horse buses running on fixed routes and schedules, debuted in St. Louis. By 1889, a little more than 100 years prior to the opening of MetroLink, electrically powered streetcars had made their debut on St. Louis streets.

Streetcars offered a vast improvement in transportation over horse and buggies and walking and were hugely popular. By the turn of the 20th century, there were 20 privately held transit companies competing to serve St. Louis neighborhoods as well as extending to undeveloped property to the west of the city limits. Streetcars were a major force used by developers in creating suburban communities such as University City, Kirkwood, and Ferguson. Developers of Ames Place and Parkview in University City took out newspaper ads highlighting the accessibility streetcars provided these new developments. A half century later some residents of these same neighborhoods would contest the expansion of MetroLink along Millbrook/Forest Park Parkway where streetcars once ran.

In the intervening years, these neighborhoods — built around transit — had slowly begun to choose automobiles as the preferred mode of transportation. Taxpayers had built miles and miles of roads that were in direct competition with the privately held streetcar companies.

Nonetheless, transit ridership soared until the stock market crash of 1929. Saddled with debt from heavy borrowing for rapid expansion, some of the companies filed for bankruptcy and the conversion of some streetcar routes to buses began. By 1935 there were 400 buses and nearly 1,500 streetcars; compared to the 411 buses, 87 light rail vehicles and 136 call-a-ride vans.
World War II proved to be a boon for transit. The automobile manufacturers turned to war time manufacturing. Furthermore, items essential for automobiles such as fuel and tires were rationed. Riders flocked to transit as the wartime economy helped fuel demand. Companies upgraded their streetcar equipment with the arrival of the new PCC streamline cars. By 1948, there were 1,345 new buses and 300 new streetcars serving St. Louis. St. Louis was dubbed the most modern transit fleet in the country. In the late 1940s, Bus transportation magazine awarded St. Louis Public Service Company the top maintenance award. Sixty years later, The American Public Transit Association would award Metro its top award for maintenance.¹

However, by 1950 automobiles were back in the show room with a huge pent up demand. Returning G.I.’s could use the G.I. bill to purchase a new home in the suburbs, but not build or repair an existing home (most of which were in old city neighborhoods - some of which were redlined). The government built highways to serve new communities such as Hazelwood, Des Peres, and Maryland Heights fostering the decline of transit ridership and more streetcar lines to be converted to bus routes.

By 1960 it was clear the privately held transit companies would soon go bankrupt. Without public assistance thousands of cuts would have to be made that would have a devastating impact on transit dependent riders. In 1963 The Bi-State Development Agency – Metro’s legal name² --purchased the St. Louis Public Service Company for $20 million.³

In 1966 the last streetcar lines were converted to bus lines and immediately the region began discussing the need for light rail.

By 1970 it was clear that there was a public role to be played in providing transit services. The ability of fare box revenue to cover all of the operating expenses of the bus system was no longer possible. In 1972, the Board of Alderman and the St. Louis County Council passed half cent sales taxes to support the bus service. The State of Illinois appropriated money for service in St. Clair and Madison Counties. While the City of St. Louis annually appropriates all the money collected from the tax to Metro, almost from the beginning St. Louis County began diverting some of the money to county roads. This conflict between road needs and transit needs in St. Louis County has been a point of contention and debate ever since. In 2008, as Metro faced a funding crisis, St. Louis County reduced its funding to Metro by $10 million to build roads.⁴

As the County’s population grew in the 1970s and 1980s, sales tax collections in St. Louis County soared and conversely population in the City of St. Louis dropped along with sales tax collections.

What’s more, the proliferation of subdivisions with winding streets, absence of sidewalks and cul de sacs, made delivering transit services problematic in a physical environment designed for the automobile, and not transit riders and pedestrians. Brand new interstate highways fanning out in every direction from downtown St. Louis seemingly made a commute on an infrequent bus archaic when the same trip in a car could be made in half the time.

The region asked itself: Was there a role for transit in the modern, sprawled out city of the 1970s and 80s? Was downtown still relevant as businesses relocated to highway interchanges? Were empty old buildings important when there was such a need for low-cost parking to compete against “free” suburban parking? Isn’t the widening of roads and highways the best way to relieve congestion? Was transit obsolete for all but the transit dependent?

Ridership on the bus system continued to plummet as former riders began to live and work in locations not convenient to transit. Increasingly, only those without automobiles were using the
One-automobile families became two-automobile families, and two automobile families became three and four automobile families. The spike in oil prices in 1982 resulted in a brief resurgence in transit ridership, but those gains were quickly lost when prices started to decline in 1983.

With the election of Vince Schoemehl as mayor of St. Louis in 1981, the community debate about transit began to change. The East-West Gateway Council of Governments began to look at how a light rail system might revitalize the transit system by attracting new riders by offering commute that is competitive with the automobile.

The debate was reframed, and the downtown area became relevant once more, as it offered the best access in the region with the most architecturally significant buildings in the region that could not be replicated elsewhere. Additionally, downtown is the home to our professional sports teams, all of whom would eventually have new taxpayer supported facilities. Old factory buildings make attractive loft developments for everyone from baby boomers to generation X’s. Parking is expensive plus it creates dead spaces in a dynamic urban environment. More transit riders equal fewer parking spaces. Widening of highways seems to generate more auto traffic and more congestion. The onslaught of the environmental movement forced more and more citizens to realize that automobiles are a major source of air pollution.

As such, local transit advocates looked to successful transit cities such as Portland, San Diego, and Sacramento arguing that the implementation of light rail would attract new riders to transit. From the start, Portland planners and elected officials used light rail as an urban development strategy. Could that be replicated in St. Louis?

In 1985 supporters of light rail in St. Louis formalized their support by creating Citizens for Modern Transit (CMT). CMT was to be at the forefront of the effort to educate the region about the benefits a light rail system to the region. CMT enjoyed the strong support of the business community and the political establishment along with a legion of ordinary citizens, many of whom had grown up with the streetcars in St. Louis and were anxious to have a rail transit component return.

The region debated the concept of light rail, its routing, costs and who would ride it. An initial plan to connect downtown to Clayton was met with vociferous opposition in parts of western St. Louis, Clayton and University City. East-West Gateway Council of Governments set aside that route—by-passing Clayton and University City—in favor of connecting the Lambert Airport with downtown. The alignment for the most part would be built...
along an existing railroad right-of-way, underneath downtown in an existing tunnel, across the Mississippi River on the rail deck of the Eads Bridge and finally terminating in East St. Louis.

The public’s perception of building a station in impoverished East St. Louis proved controversial. However, the decision also resulted in obtaining the political backing of Illinois’s congressional delegation in addition to the Missouri delegation when seeking federal financing of the project. The Illinois elected officials also obtained the promise from Missouri elected officials that the first extension of MetroLink would be built in Illinois.

It was messy, but the region was working together to build a light rail line. The region was able to get $351 million in federal funding for the project, pledging the existing assets of the value of the Eads Bridge, the downtown tunnel and 14 miles of right of way as the local match. In 1988 Metro and The Urban Mass Transit Administration – the precursor agency to the Federal Transit Administration and Metro -- signed a full funding contract. Construction began shortly thereafter and the system opened on July 31, 1993.

The project came in on-time and on budget. It was a hit from day one with daily ridership reaching 20,000 by the end of the first year of operation. What’s more Metro reconfigured the bus system so many lines would connect to MetroLink. This stopped the hemorrhaging of ridership on the bus system. The much maligned East St. Louis station quickly became the most popular stop on the line. Parking was expanded at several MetroLink stations including East St. Louis, Forest Park, and Delmar. MetroLink was clearly popular with the public.

St. Clair County immediately laid plans to fund the extension of MetroLink further east into Illinois. County Board Chairman John Baricevic led a grassroots campaign to educate his constituents about MetroLink. In November 1993, voters easily passed a half-cent sales tax to fund the expansion of MetroLink east to Belleville and beyond.

Likewise, in August of 1994, The City of St. Louis and St. Louis County took a quarter-cent sales tax measure to fund the expansion of MetroLink and to shore up the current operation. Unfortunately the campaign to pass this vote laid the seeds of distrust of Metro with the voters. Anxious to give something to everyone, Metro used the most optimistic funding scenarios to forecast that passage of the local tax would fund a major build-out of the Metro system – lines extending to every corner of St. Louis County. The vote passed in both St. Louis City and St. Louis County.
In St. Charles County a small group of community leaders wanted to get into the act. The County formed a transit district and took to a quarter-cent sales tax to the voters to build a line either from the Airport into St. Charles County or along Page Avenue, but the measure went down to defeat in both August and November of 1995.

No sooner had the region stepped up to provide a new source of revenue for Metro to expand the system, than the ground began to shift underneath the agency’s feet. Federal policy began to change.

The federal government which had helped transit agencies with operating funds announced they would no longer do that. Metro was faced with a $10 million hole in its budget. The popularity of light rail lines was contagious. The success of what were deemed unlikely places such as St. Louis, prompted cities such as Denver, Dallas, Houston, Phoenix, Charlotte and Salt Lake City to pursue rail projects.

The response from Congress and the Federal Transit Administration was to try to stretch capital match dollars further and raised the bar on what projects would be funded and to require those projects that FTA for local governments to put up half the cost of construction when the old standard was 20 percent.

It was clear that the tax St. Louis City and County voters had passed would not fund the operation of the current system and allow for the expansion of several light rail lines. For the first time Missouri State lawmakers agreed to over time to replace the lost federal operating funds. The pledge was never fully realized.

After a brief flirtation of adding a commuter rail line from Downtown to Pacific and from Downtown to Desoto, East-West Gateway Council of Governments who continued to do the planning of rail expansion, focused on planning an extension from the Forest Park Station west to Clayton and south to Shrewsbury. The Clayton portion of the extension was essentially the same idea that was rejected 15 years earlier due to neighborhood opposition.

Meanwhile, Metro, in cooperation with St. Clair County Transit District and with significant financial backing of the State of Illinois, Metro was proceeding with a 17-mile extension from East St. Louis to Scott Air Force Base.

Community leaders were banking the new found popularity of MetroLink to have changed enough minds that a low-cost expansion could be done without the bureaucratic mess of applying for federal funding. The line might be built for as little as $350 million.

The renewed idea of building MetroLink along Forest Park Parkway and Millbrook was controversial. Many neighbors were opposed, but there were also supporters including local mayors, Washington University, CMT, and prospective riders. In this context, regional leaders decided to go to the voters once again in November 1997 to ask for another quarter-cent sales tax to help replace the loss of federal operating funds and to ensure funding for further MetroLink expansion.

This time there was loosely organized opposition from a combination of local gadflies, neighbors to the proposed extension, those who felt betrayed by the 1994 campaign, and ever present anti-tax voters. The measure passed in the City of St. Louis, but failed in St. Louis County. Since both jurisdictions did not pass the tax, it could not be collected in the City of St. Louis.

Shortly after the referendum, Metro hired Tom Irwin to lead the agency. One of his first tasks was to trim bus service and to move forward with the Cross County extension. Metro retained the Cross County Collaborative, a consortium of four engineering/consulting firms to design the project and to manage the construction.

By the time the final design of the project was completed, concessions to neighbors resulted
in a line that involved considerable tunneling underneath Forest Park Parkway and lengthy bridges to flyover Interstate 44 to reach Shrewsbury. What was conceived as a low cost, at-grade, upgraded streetcar line costing about $350 million had morphed into what was essentially a $550 million almost totally grade separated extension more typical of a heavy rail extension that might be built in Chicago, Washington D.C., or New York.

Contracts were let for construction and problems began almost from the beginning. Plans were stalled out as Metro attempted to appease neighbors.

With the departure of Tom Irwin, the Metro Board brought in Larry Salci to head the agency. His goals were to straighten out the problems with the Cross County project and improve the operations of Metro.

Salci slimmed down overhead, improved the on-time performance of the transit and buses, reduced customer complaints, and increased fares and ridership. Meanwhile, he was trying to get his arms around the ongoing problems of the construction of Cross County.

Finally, bids were let out for construction. Almost from the beginning, construction drawings weren’t matching up with what the construction companies were finding in the field. Utility conflicts were encountered and construction stopped until the conflict was resolved. Construction was stalled, costs were escalating, and Salci alleged that the plans the Cross County Collaborative had certified as complete, were, in fact, incomplete. An attempt to resolve the differences were for naught. The Collaborative was asking for more money to see the project through. Salci was at the end of his rope.

During this time, the extension to Southwest Illinois College opened in 2001 and the final 3.5 miles to Scott in 2003. For the second time, Metro had brought in a major construction project on time and under budget. The FTA had put up 72 percent of the $339.2 million cost of construction.

But problems persisted in Missouri. With the Metro Board’s approval, Salci fired the Collaborative and sued them for $100 million in damages. Metro hired a team of engineers to finish the project which by now had grown to $676 million and was a year behind schedule.

In August of 2006, the 8.5-mile Cross County extension opened a year late at $100 million above what Metro originally said it would cost, and nearly twice the cost of the simple, at-grade extension that planners initially envisioned to run along Forest Park Parkway, just as the streetcars had done a half-century before.

Just as its two preceding lines had done, the Cross County extension attracted new riders to transit, ridership continued to grow, and developers were buying up land around several of the stations. However, the cost over runs and subsequent loss of the lawsuit and associated expenditures on legal fees created a climate of distrust among the public. A state audit of Metro revealed nothing of substance, but nevertheless generated more negative press. This happened just at a time that Metro was in need of additional funds to begin paying off the bonds that were sold to finance the Cross County expansion, higher costs associated with its pension plan brought on by new accounting rules, higher fuel costs, and a loss of $10 million in funding from St. Louis County.

In the fall of 2008, St. Louis County put a half-cent sales tax before the voters that would have avoided $50 million in bus and train cuts and provided a fund a help finance a future MetroLink expansion. The measure narrowly failed despite a rash of bad publicity and a failing world economy, receiving 48.5% of the vote. Consequently, a plan to dramatically cut service was put in motion in the spring of 2009, stopping a 25-year quest to expand and improve transit in the St. Louis region which was resulting in increased ridership and a rethinking of the best strategy on
how St. Louis should cope with changing global conditions as well as how the region might grow and become attractive to young people.

Since the opening of MetroLink in 1993, $13 billion in economic development has occurred around the first 18 MetroLink Stations. Examples include everything from suburban tract housing near the Memorial MetroLink station to high rise housing in the Central West End to mixed use development in the Loop. Major mixed use developments are planned for the Maplewood/Sunnen, Richmond Heights, and North Hanley MetroLink Stations.

Ridership on Transit increased from 37 million annual rides on transit to nearly 60 million rides. MetroLink has become the mode of choice for about 25 percent of the people attending special events downtown such as sporting events and festivals.

Transit has been part of the strategy the region has adopted to make gains in air quality. At a time when too many households spend more on transportation than on housing, some people have found they can live without a car or as many cars.

For years, East-West Gateway Council of Governments has advocated spreading these benefits to more people in the region with additional light rail lines fanning out from downtown as well as extending to West County. Leaders of St. Charles County and Madison County ponder what involvement, if any, their jurisdictions should play.

After 150 years, the core question remains unanswered, how can the transit system best serve St. Louis, and how are we going to pay for it?

If the region believes that an expanded transit system – perhaps initially and restored transit system – is important to the region, the leadership and stakeholders must come to an agreement about what the issues are facing the world as well as the region and come to some kind of agreement about what role transit can play in addressing these issues.

Does the region need to take a refreshed look at the MetroLink long range plan that was developed in 1990? During the 2008 campaign, Metro issued a transit expansion map that showed a number of bus rapid transit (BRT) lines which had not been vetted with either the public or the East-West Gateway Council of Government. Is there a role for BRT in the region? Yet, by issuing its own vision of the future, Metro seems to be saying it has a different view of what a long-range transit plan for the regional should look like.
We live in a world economy as evidenced by $4 per gallon gasoline in the summer of 2008 followed immediately by a world-wide economic recession. What is the energy policy of the United States going to be? Will the U.S. continue to be an oil-based economy dependent upon imported oil from the Middle East, Venezuela, and Russia? What policy changes will occur to fight global warming? Will it be a carbon tax or a gasoline tax? If the country moves to a new policy on energy consumption, transit will play a more important role than it has previously played. If high energy prices are the future, is St. Louis positioned to manage high prices as a way of life?

If energy policy changes, where will businesses look to locate? St. Louis is competing against cities such as Denver, Dallas, Minneapolis, Seattle and Portland that are growing faster than St. Louis and investing more in transit expansion. Part in parcel with transit growth is the development of mixed use communities that rely in a greater degree on transit, walking and biking, and to a lesser degree automobile use. New transit oriented neighborhoods are springing up around the country.

Clayton has taken steps that envision higher density, mixed-use, walkable developments around the two MetroLink stations in its jurisdictions. Clayton has adopted a TOD overlay code that allows such development. Other light rail cities have developed similar codes and Clayton will serve as an example for other municipalities.

Another concern is affordable housing at its relationship with transit. A Surface Transportation Policy Partnership study has shown that the average St. Louis household spent 17.6 percent of its income on transportation and 16 percent on housing. The data indicates that St. Louis has a disconnect between jobs, home and transit. A transit system that is contracting will leave dozens of nursing homes, hospitals and businesses without transit access, forcing low income people either out of jobs or into automobiles, a huge increase in expense for low income families.

What’s more, a study by Reconnecting America shows that only 35 percent of the federally assisted housing units in the St. Louis region are located near MetroLink or major bus routes, compared to 75 percent in the Denver and Portland regions. Our region’s working poor are forced to spend more on transportation.

MetroLink has attracted new riders to transit. They are discretionary riders, people who have cars, but choose to use transit as a part of their way of life. Despite huge successes in attracting new riders to transit and new development along transit lines, expansion has stalled out and declined, with the voters of St. Louis City and County failing to agree on expansion and operations, and how
to fund it. The region last voted for a tax to add a transit line in 1994. If funding could be found, the next MetroLink line is at least a decade away. Is this sustainable?

Should the city and county votes be separate? Our should there be a regional approach to funding transit, perhaps a district that includes the city and county, similar to the Zoo Museum District. An analysis of voter patterns of the 2008 Prop M loss in St. Louis County shows that the measure passed inside the I-270 perimeter. Had there been a combined city-county vote and had city residents passed the measure by 63 percent it would have passed region wide.

Whatever the approach, the draconian cutbacks experienced in the spring of 2009 by not only Metro’s riders, but the people who employ those riders, seemed to achieve the consensus that cutbacks in transit were unacceptable for a major metropolitan area. The Missouri legislature was actively considering a major infusion of money for not only Metro, but the Kansas City transit authority as well.

The potential for St. Louis to be competitive for knowledge workers in the 21st century facing the challenges of sprawl, high fuel prices, an aging population is dependent upon finding a long term reliable funding source – local, state and federal – that would allow for the operation and expansion of robust transit system using bus, light rail and perhaps streetcar.
Endnotes


2. The Bi-State Development Agency was formed in 1949 by Congress. It is a bi-state compact between the states of Missouri and Illinois. In 2002, the agency began operating under the name of Metro. For simplicity sake, the author will use Metro to refer to the agency.

3. Young, *St. Louis and its Street Cars*.


5. Author interview with Steve Dotterrer, Principal Planner City of Portland.


8. Reconnecting America, Preserving Opportunities, Saving Affordable Homes Near Transit.
Bibliography


About the Author

Since 1988 Thomas R. Shrout, Jr. has been the executive director of Citizens for Modern Transit, a not-for-profit organization composed of some 1500 volunteers representing a cross section of St. Louis businesses, academic institutions, not-for-profits and individuals. Founded in 1985 CMT successfully launched a grassroots effort to establish the St. Louis MetroLink light rail system that opened July 31, 1993 and has expanded twice with a 17 miles in May 2002 to Scott Air Force Base in Southwest Illinois and in 2006 with an 8-mile extension in St. Louis County.

Shrout is a frequent speaker about the benefits of a good rail transit and has worked with cities across the country working to build support for rail systems. He is on the national steering committee of the Rail~Volution Conference which is focused on building livable communities with rail transit.

For its work under Shrout’s leadership to improve transit in St. Louis, CMT was recognized as the 1994 recipient of the "Sold on St. Louis Award." The St. Louis Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America selected Shrout as its 1994 recipient of the Lamplighter award.

Shrout is a 1970 graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism. During college he worked in broadcast journalism. He formerly was a reporter for the Associated Press in New York City. Prior to coming to CMT, he worked for 15 years at Truman State University, winning numerous awards for marketing and public affairs.

Shrout is active in civic affairs. He served as president of the St. Louis Family Support Network which works for the prevention of Child Abuse. In 1990 he was appointed to the Board of Governors of Truman University where he served as secretary and President of the board. He serves as the citizens representative on of the Missouri Public Transit Association Board of Directors. He is vice chairman of the board of his neighborhood association. Shrout lives in the Central West End of St. Louis with his wife, Debbie, director of the St. Louis Campus of Columbia College.
Building high voltage lines, upgrading aging power plants, installing meters – these are hardly the most glamorous features of regional development.

Infrastructure is at the heart of everything we do. Talk to any business or community leader who depends on reliable supply and delivery of energy, and it’s clear they see this capital-intensive and highly technical work as critical to the region’s economic future.

Across the nation, rising demand for power means that delivery infrastructure and generating resources are under stress. In our region, demand for electricity is expected to increase by 30 percent in the next 20 years. American households will need 40 percent more electricity by 2030, according to a recent U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) projection.¹

Nationwide, the transmission system is not sufficient to handle this amount of power flowing through it. Natural gas supplies are insufficient because of reduced exploration. Aging power plants will be retired in coming years, and replacing them will be expensive—especially considering the need to reduce greenhouse gases, which contribute to climate warming.

The energy business is very capital-intensive. An analysis from The Brattle Group, a well-known energy consultant, shows that keeping pace with rising demand is projected to cost $1.5 trillion by 2030—and that’s today’s estimate.² It takes years to design, permit, finance and build facilities—meanwhile the costs go up.

Add to that the utility industry’s concerns about the availability of capital.

The Wall Street Journal recently reported that power companies across the U.S. are “slashing capital budgets and canceling projects. . . . Power companies, the third largest borrowers after the government and the financial services industry, can no longer rely on . . . cheap credit.”³

The ordinary consumer will feel the impact of rising costs to finance operations and of higher operating, fuel and purchase power costs.

Because of these increases, The Analysis Group – a Boston-based economic strategy consultant—reports that relatively high electricity prices are “the new normal” in the United States as fully regulated utilities must recover rising costs and utilities in
restructured states, where customers have a choice of suppliers, must pass higher power costs on to customers.\textsuperscript{4} Illinois is one of those restructured states. In 1997, Illinois passed legislation that allowed customers to choose their electric providers. The state spent 10 years with frozen rates and in 2007 moved to a system of purchasing power on the open market. That caused a steep increase in electric rates particularly for residential customers. Illinois is not alone. A recent \textit{Business Week} article showed that rates throughout the nation have increased by 24 percent in the past eight years. Missouri is the only state to experience a significant rate decline.\textsuperscript{5} Missouri rates have dropped by 8 percent in those years, and UE rates are 40 percent below the national average. In fact, electric rates in St. Louis are the lowest of any metropolitan area in the nation.

This article will outline existing challenges of holding a lid on prices, while reliably delivering electricity and natural gas to an increasingly energy-reliant public. It will also offer some ideas about how we can ensure our region’s energy independence and security going forward.

**CHALLENGES: GENERATION**

Let’s start with the beginning of the cycle: the generation of electricity and the retrieval of natural gas. A 2008 Brattle Group report estimated that U.S. electric utilities will need 214 gigawatts—214 billion watts—of new generation capacity by 2030, costing an estimated $700 billion to develop. The South needs the most new generation—100.5 gigawatts, but the Midwest comes in second with 59.2 gigawatts required. Aggressive efforts to reduce consumption through energy efficiency initiatives could cut the amount needed almost in half—but the need won’t go away.\textsuperscript{6} And the issue will be what fuel to use in generating that new power.

\textit{The New York Times’} Thomas Friedman recently wrote that the search for better fuel sources will be the defining project for the next generation. That’s because none of the fuel choices for generating electricity is inexpensive or without some environmental impact.\textsuperscript{7}

Of the more commonly used fuel sources, Global Energy Decisions’ most recent analysis shows that nuclear at 1.76 cents for producing one kilowatthour of electricity provides the lowest cost generation, with coal after that at 2.47 cents; then comes natural gas at 6.78 cents and oil at 10.26 cents.\textsuperscript{8}

Today, renewable power costs are significantly higher than the costs for other generating options, though renewable generating costs are dropping.
THE CASE FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY

Illinois now has legislation and Missourians recently approved a ballot petition that will encourage further development of renewable energy resources.

On November 4, 2008, Missouri voters approved Proposition C which requires the investor-owned utilities in Missouri to generate or purchase a percentage of their energy from renewable energy resources. Starting in 2011, two percent of a utility’s total retail electric sales are to come from renewable resources, increasing to 5 percent by 2014.

In Illinois, beginning in 2009, regulated delivery companies will use a state authority to procure power for retail electric customers. In August 2007, Illinois enacted legislation creating this agency, which is planning and managing this competitive procurement process. The same law created a renewables portfolio standard (RPS) requiring the purchase of renewable energy or renewable energy credits for up to 2% of each utility’s total retail electricity sales beginning June 1, 2008.

That percentage grows each year—with up to 25 percent of the state’s consumer power supply coming from renewable resources by 2025. The Illinois law seeks to generate 75 percent of renewable power from wind and the remaining 25 percent from other renewables—such as solar power, biomass and landfill gases. The law also establishes caps designed to manage customer rate increases related to the purchase of renewable energy. Under this design the procurement of renewable generation in a given year is limited so that the resulting costs may not increase customer rates beyond set thresholds.

Illinois is more favorably positioned than Missouri as a “wind state” because of the greater availability of sustained winds needed to drive turbines. Illinois has roughly 750 megawatts of wind capacity either in operation or under construction. In Missouri, only about 157 megawatts of wind capacity is operational or under construction.9

Because Missouri does not have large repositories of renewable energy—either lots of sunlight or wind—the new renewable energy mandates will force utilities here to purchase credits from outside the region—sending jobs and investment dollars to other states. Some utilities are also concerned that these mandates will significantly increase customer costs given the major difference in generating costs mentioned earlier.

In addition, wind energy development faces some major obstacles—primarily the need for large amounts of land and the intermittent nature of this resource. The hottest days, when electricity is used most, turn out to be the days when the wind doesn’t blow—as the New York Times reported: “A wind machine is a bit like a bicycle that a commuter keeps in the garage for sunny days—it saves gasoline, but the commuter has to own a car anyway.” Wind turns out to be a good way to save fuel, but not a good way to avoid building larger plants that run pretty much continuously.10

The Financial Times reports that the massive expansion of wind generation capacity across the world has outstripped the ability of manufacturers—most of them in Europe—to keep up, leading to order backlogs. This surge of demand, along with rising raw material costs, has raised turbine prices by 50 percent.11 EnergyBiz Magazine recently reported that the United States is now the world’s single largest market for wind manufacturers; 17 factories have either been announced or constructed in the United States over the past 18 months.12 Will all those plants be built? The Wall Street Journal reports that equity investment in renewable projects is expected to drop 20 percent due to the financial crisis.13

With the reduction in development funding, a major issue for renewables is the overall lack
of transmission infrastructure to bring wind energy from high wind areas (usually where few people live) to places where wind is not as prevalent and to cities where electricity demand is greatest.

Another issue the American Wind Energy Association often cites is the lack of a consistent, stable federal policy toward renewable energy.\textsuperscript{14} The Economic Stabilization Act Congress passed in October 2008 extended a production tax credit that has been a lifeline for renewables development, but the extension is only for one year. Congress has failed to extend the credit three times since the credit was first incorporated into the 1992 energy act.

**HYDROPOWER REMAINS NATION’S LARGEST RENEWABLE RESOURCE**

Hydropower, which relies on the use of the gravitational force of falling or flowing water, is environmentally friendly and the most widely used form of renewable energy in the nation. Hydropower produces no direct waste, and emits a low level of the carbon dioxide (CO\textsubscript{2}) --- the greenhouse gas that produces climate warming and is most commonly linked with generating plants.

Hydropower supplies about 19\% of the world’s electricity. Hydro accounts for 75\% of all renewable energy in the United States—but the nation’s 2,300 hydro projects generate only about 8\% of all U.S. electricity.

Our region does have a respectable amount of hydropower—the problem is, while small hydroelectric power plants can be used to meet the renewable portfolio standard in Missouri, large hydroelectric plants, like those AmerenUE operates, are not counted under Missouri’s new renewables portfolio mandate.

At UE, hydropower accounts for 3\% of total generation. UE owns the Osage Hydroelectric Plant at the Lake of the Ozarks and was responsible for the creation of the Lake in the late 1920s. UE also owns a hydro plant built in 1913 on the Mississippi River in Keokuk, Iowa.

These plants rely on dams—as do most U.S. hydroelectric plants. While it is commonly thought that U.S. dams are tapped out, in fact the National Hydropower Association reports that less than 3\% of the 80,000 dams in the United States are being used for hydropower. About 10,000 megawatts of new hydro projects are under licensing review, according to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.\textsuperscript{15} Still, Edison Electric Institute and other energy associations point to environmental
concerns related to loss of fish and diversion of water, creating major hurdles in the expansion of hydropower.

THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING COAL-FIRE GENERATION: CARBON

The International Energy Agency reports that about 80 percent of the world’s energy supply comes from fossil fuels—primarily coal. Coal fuels generators that produce half the nation’s electricity and 84 percent of the electricity Ameren companies provide to 2.4 million customers in Missouri and Illinois. If you look at each state, in Missouri and Illinois coal-fired power accounts for roughly half of the electricity generated.

For many years, coal has been the clear favorite because it is abundant and has been relatively inexpensive. Now, that is changing with the demand for coal rising across the globe and the high cost of transporting more environmentally friendly coal from the West.

If you discount the cost of building generation and just look at production costs, coal is still an attractive choice. But coal is under siege. New regulations requiring even more stringent reductions in sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide and mercury were recently overturned by federal courts, but most industry experts believe they will be reinstated in some form. The greater threat to coal comes from moves to address global climate warming. Electricity generation accounts for 32 percent of the total carbon released in the United States. For each megawatthour of electricity generated, coal plants produce about a ton of CO$_2$.

Only two ways exist today to reduce CO$_2$ emissions at coal-fired plants----increase the efficiency of generating units or capture and store the resulting CO$_2$.

To build a coal-fired power plant that captures, separates and safely sequesters the carbon dioxide into the ground before it goes up the smokestack requires either an expensive retrofit or a whole new system—that new system would cost about 40 percent more than conventional systems to build and operate and would produce 20 percent less electricity, according to a recent Massachusetts Institute of Technology study titled “The Future of Coal.”

The state of Illinois in late 2008 passed legislation to enable development of coal gasification with carbon capture and storage --- in the words of the release describing Senate Bill 1987: “putting Illinois coal to work to produce electricity and substitute natural gas. This far-reaching legislation is expected to bring thousands of new green jobs to Illinois.” To ensure consumers are protected from the high cost of developing this new approach, the General Assembly must approve the final cost of the initial clean coal facility, the price that utilities will be required to pay for electricity from the facility and the allowable rate of return for the power plant developer. The legislation authorizes Illinois natural gas utilities to enter into long-term contracts with facilities that convert coal to substitute natural gas, provided the facilities sequester 90 percent of their carbon emissions. There are also caps on the prices these facilities can charge.

These safeguards are necessary because carbon sequestration on a large scale is unproven. That’s why policies calling for reductions in greenhouse gases must allow sufficient time for research, testing and development of safe, proven, cost-effective technologies for CO$_2$ emission reduction.

Complicating this issue is that greenhouse gas emissions are a global problem. In 2008, China surpassed the United States in greenhouse gas emissions, according to figures released by the Energy Information Administration.
For this reason, Edison Electric Institute and other utility associations argue that emission reduction programs must not only be national but also global in scope. Multiple nations and nearly 40 U.S. states have either established mandates or are involved in ongoing initiatives aimed at addressing climate change—creating a patchwork of regulations.

As lawmakers discuss national legislation that would require reduction of greenhouse gases, generators across the Midwest are concerned about the impact. Poor policy could severely penalize consumers, damage both the economy and the environment over the long term and undermine our region's competitiveness. Dependent as the Midwest is on coal-fired generation, this region could face enormous economic repercussions that could seriously affect individuals and jobs. In fact, a detailed analysis conducted by Ameren through interviews with multiple experts and significant modeling conducted by outside experts shows that under some climate change policy scenarios being considered, by 2030, the regional wholesale price of electricity could rise as much as 175 percent, and consumer rates could double. Wholesale natural gas prices in our region could jump by 90 percent as more electricity is generated from gas. In turn, higher prices for electricity, natural gas and other energy commodities could significantly influence the overall cost of other consumer goods and services.

PRESERVING THE NUCLEAR OPTION

Many utilities are analyzing the impact of climate change legislation not only because of the need to install controls on existing generating units, but because new generating plants are on the drawing boards. New baseload generation – those large, almost continuously operating plants – will be necessary by 2018-2020 in Missouri. No new, large plants have been built in Missouri by UE since 1984 when UE built the only nuclear plant in the state. Since then, demand for power has grown—increasing 50 percent since 1990 in UE territory, which covers 57 Missouri counties.

Since 1998, substantial new electric generation capacity has been added in Illinois, almost exclusively in the form of natural gas turbine (peaking power) plants. Nuclear generation capacity accounts for 42 percent of electricity supplies in Illinois, more than twice the national fraction of 20 percent.

Nuclear power produces almost no greenhouse gas emissions, making it attractive if climate change legislation is passed. That’s why by year-end 2008, 17 companies had filed 19 license applications with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
to preserve the option to build new nuclear generating units. Illinois’ Exelon Nuclear and UE were two of those companies.

Although neither UE nor Exelon have decided to build new nuclear energy facilities, seeking NRC approval for a license—a more than three-year process—will preserve the nuclear option for the future. It also will preserve both companies’ eligibility for federal loan guarantees and production tax credits, made possible by the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The government is expected to support $18.5 billion of the total $122 billion in loan guarantees requested by applicants.

Even with the benefits of federal incentives, nuclear generation is expensive. In 2008, Cambridge Energy Research Associates Inc.—a research and consulting firm—analyzed the cost of constructing new generating capacity and found costs for coal-fired generation have doubled in the past eight years. But among all baseload generating sources, the costs of components and construction materials for nuclear power plants scored the biggest run-up—almost triple the costs of 2000.

**NATURAL GAS GROWS LESS SCARCE**

Illinois-based generators were not in the minority in turning to combustion turbine units (CTGs) powered by natural gas to fulfill the generating capacity needs of the 1990s. CTGs are inexpensive to construct and can be sited and built quickly. They can also be dispatched just as quickly.

Gas-fired generation also became the key driver for growth in demand, affecting supplies available for heating homes. In the meantime, violent hurricanes disrupted supplies of natural gas from the Gulf of Mexico, and Canada began to export less gas due to reduced drilling activity.

Rising natural gas prices hit homeowners and businesses hard—with gas prices tripling in the late 1990s. The high cost of gas also made some of the region’s gas-fired power plants white elephants as they became too expensive to operate.

Gas delivery companies, like Laclede and UE and the Ameren Illinois-based utilities, purchase gas from pipelines and deliver it at the pipeline price to homes and businesses.

These companies use a range of approaches to control costs to consumers—from long-term contracts and hedging strategies to storing lower cost gas in storage fields and tapping those stores when the price of gas rises significantly.

Even with these efforts, natural gas remains an increasingly volatile commodity. The 2008 Energy Information Administration Annual Energy Outlook predicts that natural gas prices will remain relatively flat through 2030, but if natural gas consumption is 25 percent above the Energy Information Agency’s forecasted levels due to increased gas-fired generation, then the Edison Electric Institute model predicts that the wellhead price will double.

Energy Information Agency data also shows that natural gas production is rising at a rate not seen since the 1950s, thanks to higher prices and technology that has unlocked reserves that were unattainable a few years ago. Much of the added output is coming from shale—layers of gas-rich rock that underlie parts of 27 states, including Illinois.

The most prolific of these is the Barnett Shale under Fort Worth, Texas, which has seen gas output rise tenfold since 1999. A 2008 study by Navigant Consulting estimates that gas produced from the Barnett and other U.S. shale formations could increase six-fold in the next decade.

Natural gas-fired units are being seen as a likely alternative for generation-starved utility companies with coal-fired plants facing major environmental regulatory constraints and nuclear plants very expensive to build. Natural gas has a much lower impact on climate warming than coal-
fired generation—emitting half the CO$_2$ of coal-fired plants. The Edison Electric Institute estimates that natural gas could account for 22 percent of total U.S. generating capacity in the next 10 years.\textsuperscript{22}

That’s the good news. The bad news is broad-scale fuel switching from coal to natural gas could hurt electric system reliability, according to a November 2008 report from the North American Electric Reliability Corp. (NERC). NERC’s concern is that the “dash to gas” could destabilize the transmission infrastructure because it would mean coal-fired plants would be shuttered.\textsuperscript{23}

**THE FIFTH FUEL ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

Today, in the face of rising fuel costs and increasing concerns about carbon emissions, both electric utilities and policymakers are taking a hard look at energy efficiency as a least cost solution—a fifth fuel in that energy efficiency initiatives help defer the need to build new generation.

Energy efficiency measures take many forms, including enhanced codes and standards, utility-sponsored investments at customer sites and demand response programs. These programs help customers respond to price signals to reduce consumption at certain times when demand for power is greatest.

In Missouri, through a stakeholder-driven process, regulators establish rules for planning for future energy resource needs—the integrated resource planning process. UE filed a plan in early 2008 that calls for the development of energy efficiency and demand response programs, a focus on increased renewable energy resource development and the addition of baseload generation in the 2018-2020 timeframe.

As a result of this planning process, UE committed to spend $24 million in 2009 moving up to $56 million by 2015 on new energy efficiency programs in Missouri.

Through a new planning process and legislation mentioned earlier in connection with the renewables portfolio standard, Illinois distribution companies are working to reduce electricity consumption. Illinois utilities are relying on consumer education programs and equipment upgrades and replacement. By 2010 Ameren Illinois utilities will be spending a minimum of $44 million per year on energy efficiency programs.

A utility push supporting energy efficiency is not new. In the 1970s, increasing energy efficiency in the face of the energy crisis became a priority. Utilities and government
agencies introduced appliance standards, building codes and utility demand-side management/response programs that shifted demand away from daily and seasonal peaks. Agencies set standards and launched programs—like the ENERGY STAR® program. (ENERGY STAR remains a respected government-backed symbol providing unbiased information to consumers, offering a range of appliances that earn an ENERGY STAR designation.)

The legacy of these efforts has been to encourage adoption of more efficient appliances, the progressive tightening of building codes, the evolution of heating ventilation and air conditioning designs and sophisticated energy management systems. However, in the past 30-plus years, electricity consumption has continued to rise significantly.

**DELIVERY SYSTEMS—THE CHALLENGES TO OVER-TAXED TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS**

While the transmission sector—the high voltage lines that carry electricity from power plants across vast stretches of the U.S.—represents only about 10 percent of the total value of all electric system assets, transmission plays a critical role in ensuring reliable delivery of power. When our nation has experienced major black-outs, it was the transmission system, or “grid,” that failed.

Recognizing its importance, in crafting the 2005 Energy Policy Act lawmakers included incentives for building transmission and designated transmission corridors to be “in the national interest.”

Transmission has been especially valuable to Midwestern utilities that could link into multiple systems given their central location. In recent years, with 7,400 circuit miles of transmission, Ameren utilities in Missouri and Illinois have invested heavily in their transmission system facilities, strengthening a system that has traditionally been among the nation’s most robust. Since 2002, Ameren transmission system investment is up 20 percent—with Ameren companies spending more than $200 million on their transmission facilities.

The Analysis Group reports that utilities’ annual investment in transmission and distribution systems more than doubled in the decade from 1995 to 2006. That hasn’t been enough to keep up with the demands of electricity markets and increased power consumption—both of which have caused
serious congestion. To provide adequate delivery of power, the Brattle Group estimates that transmission and distribution together will require almost $900 billion in investment by 2030.\textsuperscript{25}

One factor in the need to expand the transmission grid is the growth of renewable energy sources in response to mandates that utilities increase the percentage of renewable energy in their generation portfolios. The Midwest Independent System Operator (MISO) has reported requests for transmission service from applicants that represent the addition of over 50,000 megawatts of wind generating capacity—well beyond what the system can handle. (MISO, as our region’s transmission system operator, has ultimate responsibility for the transmission system, but each utility owns the transmission in its service territory and must plan for, and figure out how to cover, the costs of any improvements.)

**EFFORTS TO “HARDEN” DELIVERY SYSTEMS GOING INTO HOMES AND BUSINESSES**

From winter’s ice and heavy snow to summer’s wind and heavy rains, the region’s utilities have been forced to respond to ever more violent weather. Illinois and Missouri utilities have focused on hardening their existing electrical systems by increasing the frequency of tree trimming and vegetation clearing near wires, replacing wood poles with concrete, steel or composite structures and in the hardest hit areas, burying the lines.

Of Ameren utilities’ 77,000 miles of distribution line over 64,000 square miles in Missouri and Illinois, roughly 20 percent in UE’s service area is underground; in Illinois, that percentage is 13 percent. Traditionally, utilities chose to install overhead wiring because it’s several times more costly to underground power lines. The Edison Electric Institute estimates that, on average, undergrounding costs approximately $1 million a mile.

With a primarily overhead system that is vulnerable to violent weather, UE in 2007 launched Power On, which includes spending $150 million on expanded tree-trimming—a doubling of the annual budget; $85 million on circuit and pole inspections; and $300 million on undergrounding lines in the most troublesome and outage prone areas. This project represents the single largest distribution project ever undertaken in the region, with more than 900 individual projects benefiting tens of thousands of customers.

In addition to hardening their systems, utilities are also looking at developing intelligent technology to better focus on-the-ground restoration crews, improving restoration time.

In fact, the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) is leading several collaborative demonstration projects that may help Ameren utilities incorporate information and communications technology—what is known as “smart grid” technologies. Communications hardware and software would be installed to allow operators to monitor in real time where power was coming from and where it was needed.\textsuperscript{26}

An intelligent grid can send electricity in multiple directions—something the existing grid cannot do; so, for example, if we have a fleet of millions of plug-in electric vehicles, we’ve got to have a grid that not only knows how to fill up the batteries with electricity, but one where the same vehicles can send electricity back to the grid when power is needed. With a smart grid, electric plug-in vehicles could serve as a large battery.

These control systems also would allow operators to ensure that, while there was enough power when needed, there was no need to keep vast reserves of power on standby—thus vastly reducing costs.
The smart grid would be able to cope with taking in power from micro-generation units and its improved balancing of generation would mean that intermittent sources, like wind power, could be used without so much back-up power from baseload generation sources.

With smart metering, the peaks and troughs of demand for electricity can be smoothed by manufacturing appliances that use electricity smarter—this would involve creating “dynamic demand” technology. Motors would cut in and out to turn on or off household equipment. Smart electricity meters could also help people manage their own electricity use more efficiently. Utilities in 33 states are involved in offering some form of advanced metering or real-time pricing programs which allow them to charge lower prices to customers who use their appliances during off-peak periods.

In Illinois, Ameren utilities are participating in a statewide smart grid collaborative aimed at giving customers the option of “real-time” pricing. At year-end 2008, Ameren’s utilities in Illinois had approximately 2,000 customers signed up for real-time, or Power Smart Pricing, a program run by CNT Energy—the Chicago-based nonprofit charged with creating this program for the state’s utilities.

THE FUTURE — WHAT SHOULD WE DO TO ENSURE OUR REGION’S ENERGY SECURITY AND INDEPENDENCE

The region’s future success depends upon developing and commercially employing technologically sophisticated approaches, reducing our energy consumption, and working together to build support for significant infrastructure development.

Prices for energy continue to rise as we use more and more electricity and natural gas. In the meantime, increased demand triggers the need for more power plants, more transmission and an upgraded delivery infrastructure. In our region, we will be forced to retire aging power plants – most generating plants are at least 25 years old and many are much older.

Add to this the need to respond to the growing interest in plug-in hybrid electric vehicles—expanding the demand for power even more. Because the energy business is capital-intensive and its facilities require years of planning, a clearly defined national energy policy is essential.

That policy must take into account the long-term horizons of energy resource planning. It should provide incentives to put new, clean technologies in place for the future and help utilities encourage more efficient use of energy. Energy efficiency must be viewed as the equivalent of generation and factored into energy providers’ portfolios of generation capacity.

Policy makers must also factor in the development of renewable resources, while taking into consideration the need to develop and test technologies that help reduce greenhouse gases and other emissions. They should encourage environmental stewardship, while ensuring that energy providers are able to provide safe, reliable electricity and natural gas at reasonable prices.

Finding new energy solutions won’t be cheap or easy. We must be very careful about investing large amounts of money in approaches that don’t work for customers or our economy.
If, as a region, we work together to encourage a constructive regulatory environment, press for investment incentives for development of new technologies and embrace energy efficiency both in our businesses and homes, we can effectively respond to the energy infrastructure challenges we face. We can encourage economic development and ensure that we provide a secure—and independent—energy future for the next generation.
Endnotes

6. The Battle Group.
25. The Battle Group.
About the Author

Richard Mark joined Ameren Corporation in 2002, serving first as Vice President of Customer Service and then assuming responsibility for Governmental Policy. In 2005, he was promoted to Senior Vice President, Energy Delivery, with responsibility for delivering electricity and natural gas to 1.2 million Missouri customers.

Before joining Ameren, Mr. Mark spent six years as president and CEO of St. Mary’s Hospital of East St. Louis, where he is credited with returning the institution to financial health and improving city residents’ access to healthcare.

Mr. Mark serves on the boards of several community and business organizations and has received numerous awards and honors for his executive leadership and service.
St. Louis is known for its plethora of governments. More than 850 units of local government exist in the 16-county metropolitan area. This patchwork quilt of political jurisdictions leads to competition and conflict, and makes it difficult to take action on a regional basis. However, a crisis arose in the Illinois portion of the metro area in August 2007 that provides an interesting case study in regional problem solving and intergovernmental cooperation.

BACKGROUND

In August of 2005, Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast and laid waste to the city of New Orleans. Katrina was the costliest hurricane in American history with damage estimated at $81.5 billion and one of the deadliest, killing more than 1,800 people. Much of the death and destruction was not caused by the hurricane itself but by the subsequent flooding caused by the storm surge. Hardest hit was the city of New Orleans. The city’s flood protection system failed in more than 50 places, resulting in the flooding of approximately 80 percent of the city.

In the aftermath of Katrina, Congress appropriated funds to have FEMA review and evaluate the urban floodplains across the country and alter its flood risk maps accordingly. The FEMA flood maps are used by local planning and zoning offices, banks and other lending institutions. Areas designated on the maps as high risk for flooding are required to purchase expensive flood insurance. One of these areas that would come under FEMA review was the American Bottom of the Mississippi River in Southwestern Illinois.

The American Bottom is a large floodplain of the Mississippi River, covering 175 square miles across the river from St. Louis and ranging from Alton south to the Kaskaskia River. It is home to approximately 150,000 people living in cities like Wood River, Granite City, East St. Louis and Cahokia. The communities of the American Bottom contain billions of dollars of development and provide some 50,000 jobs to area residents.

The American Bottom is protected by a series of levees that were built in the late 1940s and early 1950s. There are three
systems that are managed by four different levee districts and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Wood River Drainage and Levee District maintains 20.8 miles of levees in the River Bend area. It protects 13,700 acres including parts of Alton, Roxana, Hartford and Wood River, and includes large industries like Olin Corporation in East Alton and the ConocoPhillips refinery in Roxana.

The Metro East Sanitation District maintains the levees from the Cahokia Creek on the north to the Harding Ditch on the south. Together with the Chain of Rocks Canal Levee, it protects the Granite City, East St. Louis and Cahokia areas including large developments like Gateway Commerce Center and major industries like U.S. Steel’s Granite City Works and Kraft Foods. The Chain of Rocks Canal Levee is maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Prairie DuPont Levee and Sanitary District and the Fish Lake Levee District manage a levee system in the Dupo/East Carondelet/Columbia area. A huge business park has been planned for this area.

Each of these special purpose districts has a relatively small tax base and a limited authorization to levy a property tax within its boundaries.

FEMA DROPS BOMBSHELL-AMERICAN BOTTOM TO BE HIT WITH EXPENSIVE FLOOD INSURANCE MANDATE

On August 15, 2007, U.S. Rep. Jerry Costello, a democrat from Belleville, Illinois, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers cosponsored a levee summit, bringing together all of the above levee districts as well as area business leaders, to get a better understanding of the overall flood protection system in Southwestern Illinois. At that meeting, a spokesperson for FEMA explained that the agency was undertaking a project to remap floodplain areas throughout the entire nation, as a result of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. Levee standards and the deficiencies of some of the levees protecting the American Bottom were discussed. According to Madison County Board chairman Alan Dunstan, nothing alarming came out of the meeting, as most of those in attendance already knew that problems existed. It was decided to meet again at the end of the month.

At the second meeting, however, the FEMA spokesperson threw a bombshell on the table, according to Dunstan. The federal agency, which is broken into 10 regions, was undertaking
the remapping project on an area by area basis, and the American Bottom was near the top of the list. A map was being developed that would show the entire American Bottom as a high-hazard flood area, a draft would be ready by early summer 2008, and it would become official by the summer of 2009. The impact of this action would be devastating.²

Since the construction of the levees, most of the American Bottom had been considered an area of low to moderate risk of flooding by FEMA. According to Dunstan, when FEMA made its announcement, only 1 percent of Bottom residents carried flood insurance.³ However, under federal law, anyone in a high hazard flood area who has a mortgage from a federally regulated or insured lender and that mortgage is secured by a building, has to buy flood insurance. And, the cost of that insurance is nearly quadruple that of properties in low to moderate risk areas.⁴

“There are plenty of high hazard zones already shown in the three Metro East counties behind the levees” said David Schein, regional flood insurance liaison for FEMA’s Region 5. “The issue is, if the levees get de-accredited -- which is supposed to happen next year (2009) -- the depths of flooding would be much greater. Instead of there being pockets of high flood hazard area, it will be floodplain all the way to Bluff Road.”⁵

According to Schein, flood insurance has been a federal requirement since 1974, anytime improved property - that's a building - is offered as collateral for a loan from a federally regulated lender or government agency or for a grant for a building -- any bank, savings and loan, credit union, thrift or trust.⁶

“It is not Bill's Mortgage Company. But, Bill's mortgage company is likely to sell that mortgage to Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac in the secondary market in which case it becomes a regulated loan,” Schein said. “If anybody has a mortgage and that mortgage is secured by a building in the high-risk floodplain, and the mortgage is from a federally regulated or insured lender, flood insurance has been required since 1974.”⁷

While premiums vary with individual circumstances, www.floodsmart.gov, the official site of the National Flood Insurance Program, estimates that a $100,000 home in a moderate- to low-risk zone would pay $287 per year for flood insurance including coverage on its contents (2008 rates). However, move that home into a high-risk zone and the premium jumps to $825 for the building alone. Add content coverage and the price jumps to $1,143.⁸

On the other end of the spectrum, federally backed flood insurance caps at $250,000 for a single-family home. If more than that is owed on the home and it meets the guidelines of the 1974 act, the owner needs to seek additional insurance on the private market.

And businesses aren't exempt. The same requirements apply to non-residential property as well. According to floodsmart.gov, a half-million dollar building, with a half-million dollars worth of contents -- whether that be supplies, inventory or equipment -- would see a premium jump from $4,736 to $11,237 per year. And FEMA caps its insurance coverage for non-residential property at the $500,000 level. Anything more would require the owner to go to the private market.⁹

According to Dunstan, some of the communities of the American Bottom -- places like East St. Louis, Alorton, Centreville, Washington Park, Brooklyn and Venice -- are among the poorest in the metropolitan area. Dunstan said that requiring poor people to buy expensive flood insurance would be devastating to them and their communities, possibly triggering mortgage defaults and foreclosures. He said that it would certainly depress home values throughout the Bottom.¹⁰

“So the bottom line is that if you had a federally backed mortgage, you would have to have flood insurance,” Dunstan said. “Let’s say a lot of people would be forced out. Well, who’s going to come in and buy? Why would you buy a home down there where you have to have flood insurance?
Why wouldn’t you buy above the bluff where you don’t need flood insurance? There were a lot of issues.”

Dunstan also said that the requirements of the high-hazard flood area would be devastating to new development. Sites would have to be raised above flood levels, greatly increasing the cost of development. He said that Opus Northwest, a Minneapolis-based developer of real estate projects across North America, pulled out of a proposed $600 million development in the Pontoon Beach area because of the FEMA threat.

Dunstan said he had a good working relationship with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps’ role was to certify or decertify the levees based on its determination of the levee’s ability to withstand a 100-year or 500-year flood. Dunstan said that Southwestern Illinois leaders have worked closely with the Corps with a goal toward fixing the problems as fast as possible. The relationship with FEMA, however, was not so congenial.

“One thing that I had an argument with FEMA on,” said Dunstan, “is they had this attitude that we were putting our heads in the sand and not identifying the problem. That wasn’t right. We understood that we had a problem but we wanted time to fix the problem before the maps became permanent. There are people out there who simply couldn’t afford the flood insurance. I think if you’re living on property protected by a levee, you should have flood insurance, but I don’t want to make it mandatory because it would become an unfair burden to those people. That’s all I was trying to tell FEMA,” added Dunstan.

That argument did not do much to persuade FEMA. Schein said that FEMA’s responsibility was to study the risk and communicate the risk so local officials, business owners and homeowners could make informed decisions to protect themselves.

“Poor people are the ones that need insurance the most,” Schein said. “Bill Gates doesn’t need insurance. It’s the folks who can least afford to be damaged by flood who need insurance. After a flood, very few people recover without it. Even Federal Disaster Assistance doesn’t come close to making people whole.”

AREA LEADERS DEVISE TO BUY TIME, DODGE FEMA BOMBSHELL

The problem was complex and multifaceted. Estimates from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers put the cost of repairs at $180 million or more. If this cost were to be limited to the taxing powers of the individual levee districts, the
impact on property taxes in the American Bottom would have been severe, causing further impact on cash-strapped home owners and businesses.

Because the problem was spread over three counties, 20 cities and four levee districts, managing the problem would be a huge hurdle.

And, the clock was ticking. It was estimated that the necessary repairs could take five to 10 years to complete. Meanwhile, the new maps would become effective in August of 2009 -- just two years away.

Area leaders devised a plan to try to buy time before the maps would become operational and meanwhile create a mechanism for funding and management of the repair program.

Two paths were selected to try to delay implementation of the maps.

The East West Gateway Council of Governments was called upon to work with the three counties and 25 municipalities to apply to FEMA for the area to be designated an AR or restoration zone. If the area were to be designated an AR Zone rather than a high-risk zone, flood insurance would still be mandatory but much less than under the high-risk designation.

According to Les Sterman, executive director of the East-West Gateway Council of Governments, the four levee districts, the three counties and all of the affected municipalities needed to pass resolutions in support of the Zone AR application, to commit themselves to undertake a certain land use approach and to enforce certain restrictions on development in the floodplain. Sterman said it was difficult but people generally understood the importance and the urgency. The deadline for submittal of the application was the end of February 2008, and that deadline was met.\(^{17}\)

The other avenue that was pursued was through Congress. Despite the fact that the entire St. Louis area was part of the same watershed and faced the same flood threats, due to the fact that the Missouri side was governed by a different FEMA regional office, remapping of the Missouri side of the watershed was running two to three years behind that of the Illinois side.

Following the August 2007 meeting, Costello drafted legislation that, if passed, would delay the implementation of the new FEMA maps until the Missouri side of the metro area had been remapped as well. This, it was hoped, would give Southwestern Illinois leaders enough time to bring the levees up to the 100-year certification level and stave off the insurance mandate.\(^{18}\)

**SWIL DELEGATION WORKS WITH STATE LEGISLATURE TO PASS ENABLING LEGISLATION**

One of the people attending the August meeting was Illinois State Sen. Bill Haine, a Democrat from Alton, Illinois. He said that he came away from the meeting mulling over the problem and trying to think of a mechanism that would provide funding, provide governance and would be palatable to the people of Southwestern Illinois, the legislature and the governor.\(^{19}\)

Haine said there were a number of factors to be considered. First, the American Bottom spread out over three counties. These counties were not just separate governmental units but there was also a historic, political rivalry that existed between Madison and St. Clair counties. The solution would need to maintain the independence of the counties while providing a mechanism for group action.\(^{20}\)

A second problem, according to Haine, was the image of the levee districts in Southwestern Illinois. Money could simply not be handed over to the districts. There would need to be oversight.\(^{21}\)

“Years ago these levee districts had developed bad public images and reputations,” Haine
said. “That’s the historic fact that’s there. I can’t change history and I told the drainage district lobbyists that I was dealing with a unique situation in Madison County; I was crafting the bill because of what exists there, not wishful thinking. No one was going to support a tax with millions of dollars of bonding authority with the levee boards managing the money. That just wasn’t going to happen. It had to be a countywide commission with ample power, and accountable to the county board. That way it would work.”

A third problem was that there was no source of money to pay for the repairs. “Where do we get money?” asked Haine. “The federal government has an intermittent approach to funding these levee repairs. In addition, FEMA was busily going about the whole country with this program, so you were going to have billions and billions of dollars waiting in line all over the United States. So, then the burden becomes local. Depending upon the feds to come in, in a timely fashion, and save us was simply unrealistic. It just was not going to happen,” Haine added.

Haine said that he laid out a template based on something he had been involved in almost 30 years before -- the creation of the Madison and St. Clair County Transit Districts. These were separate agencies, with separate boards, funded by sales tax and answerable to their respective county boards. He asked the East-West Gateway Council of Governments for the retail sales figures for the three counties. He checked with a mortgage banker to get an estimate of the amount of debt the projected annual revenue could support.

Based upon this information, Haine drafted a bill that would allow each of the three counties -- Madison, St. Clair and Monroe -- to establish a flood prevention district and create a three-member commission to address flood controls. With the approval of the county board, the commission would have authority to establish a retail sales tax of up to a quarter of a cent throughout the county to pay for levee repairs. The commission would have the authority to issue revenue bonds backed by its sales tax receipts.

According to Haine, based on 2007 retail sales levels in the three-county area, the sales tax could support a bond issue of $170 million to $180 million. The tax would sunset after 25 years or sooner if the debt were repaid in less time.

The bill further authorized the flood prevention commission to hire staff and to enter into intergovernmental agreements with other existing levee and flood prevention agencies to carry out its mission. Haine said that if two or more counties shared a levee, they would be required to hire the same
staff so there would not be a duplication of services.

It would be up to each of the counties to implement the legislation, according to Haine, but the entire county would either be in or out. The district could not be created to cover only a portion of the county.

“Unlike the transit district which goes on in perpetuity,” said Haine, “in this case it was limited only to the construction and reconstruction of the levees. This entity would cease to exist at some point.”

Haine said he settled on a sales tax because, while a revenue source was needed, people would simply rise up in revolt if it were a property tax. A sales tax, on the other hand, melts into the system. It is paid a little bit by everyone, including those who pass through, he said.

With the bill drafted, Haine then went to the political leadership of Southwestern Illinois. He got the support of Costello and U.S. Rep. John Shimkus, a Republican from Collinsville, Illinois. He ran the idea by county board chairman Dunstan and St. Clair County board chairman Mark Kern -- and even former St. Clair County board chairman John Baricevic. Each helped to fine tune the bill. He then took it to the mayors of the three counties.

"Some said, 'My community is going to pay the tax but not receive any benefit.' I said, 'But you don't know who's paying the tax and you have community on the bluffs collecting a tax, but those who are paying the tax may be people who live in the bottom land, who are shopping there. Or, the people who are paying the tax may live in the town or the city on the bluffs, but they work in the bottoms or they're invested in a mutual fund that owns stock in a major industry in the bottoms. You have all kinds of interconnectiveness here, and we have to recognize that,'" said Haine.

He got their support.

Haine filed his bill on February 7, 2008. He then went to Senate Pres. Emil Jones and garnered his support. Sen. Frank Watson, a Republican from Greenville and then senate minority leader, helped refine the bill and brought support from his side of the isle.

The bill was sponsored by every one of the area’s representatives in the House and Rep. Ron Stephens, the sole Republican representative from Southwestern Illinois, sought and received the support of House Minority Leader Tom Cross.

Although there was some opposition, the bill passed both houses with large majorities. Rep. Jay Hoffman, a Democrat from Collinsville, Illinois, took the bill to Gov. Rod Blagojevich and explained the importance to him. Despite the fact that the governor was adamantly opposed to any new taxes, the bill was signed in six days. It became effective on May 21, 2008.

During the summer of 2008, all three counties established their levee commissions and adopted the sales tax provisions. The tax took effect on January 1, 2009.

COSTELLO, SHIMKUS, DURBIN CONVINCE FEMA TO SLOW DOWN RE-MAPPING PROCESS

While Southwestern Illinois’ state legislators were working on the funding bill, Costello and Shimkus were successfully working to pass legislation to require FEMA to delay implementation of the new flood maps until the entire watershed was completed. As drafted, that legislation would have affected all the flood plains in the nation that would be reviewed by FEMA. The bill passed the House unanimously and was sent to the Senate. The Senate, however, passed a different version sponsored by Sen. Dick Durbin, a Democrat from Illinois. The Senate version was specific to the St. Louis watershed. Because two different versions were passed, the bill was sent to a conference
committee to resolve the differences. During the summer of 2008, Costello, Shimkus and Durbin held multiple meetings with FEMA officials in an effort to negotiate an administrative solution. Costello said that after the bill passed the House, FEMA officials expected it would just go away. But, he said, that once it passed the Senate and went to a conference committee, he, Shimkus and Durbin were able to convince them that they would pass a bill that would impact the entire nation, something that FEMA very much did not want to see happen.33

“The first few meetings they just said absolutely no,” said Costello. “They were proceeding full steam ahead. John Shimkus and I worked together on the House side and Senator Durbin on the Senate side. I think they saw the handwriting on the wall -- we were not going away and this was an issue that we were determined to get done. Because of our persistence, they finally agreed to talk about it and, after a number of meetings between my staff, Senator Durbin’s and Congressman Shimkus’, we were able to reach an agreement. FEMA operates in 10 regions and they have funding for certain projects and specific regions and they felt that if this became law, that it would take them many years to accomplish what they wanted to accomplish.”34

On September 23, 2008, FEMA agreed to hold off the re-mapping of the American Bottom until the entire watershed, including the Missouri side of the river, had been completed. This agreement bought Southwestern Illinois leaders two to three years additional time to make the mandatory repairs.

“The agreement achieved the fairness that we had been working hard to accomplish,” said Costello. “I said from the beginning that this was about restoring equity to the re-mapping process, and we achieved that. Everyone must continue to evaluate their personal flood risk and take appropriate measures to protect themselves, but the entire region will be remapped at the same time, ensuring no disadvantage to Illinois residents.”35

Costello said that while there was a signed agreement with FEMA, he was still concerned that a new administration might overturn it. To insure against that, Costello said that he wanted to get the agreement codified into law by tacking it onto a bill that was sure to be passed by Congress and signed by the President. He found the perfect vehicle in a continuing resolution to maintain funding for governmental agencies. That resolution, and the FEMA agreement with it, became law near the end of 2008.36

“It was a great legislative victory for us and it gave local leaders the opportunity to proceed with the plan that they had implemented and that they are moving forward on,” said Costello. “It was good news all the way around.”37

Dunstan, Madison County’s board chairman, was delighted by the news.38

“Giving us time to fix the problem before this becomes a permanent situation is going to help our residential community and our business community,” Dunstan said. “People should still have flood insurance, but that insurance will be a lot cheaper than if those new maps were implemented. We’re going to work as fast as we can to get these levees fixed before the maps become final.”39

CONCLUSION

All of this was accomplished in 13 months. As of this writing, the East-West Gateway Council of Governments is managing the process until an executive director can be hired. Engineers have been hired and are taking samples, running tests and working on the plans and specifications; tax revenues are being collected; a financial consultant has been hired to guide the bonding process.
and intergovernmental agreements between the multiple public bodies involved. It is expected that an executive director will be hired, bonds will be sold and work will begin in 2009. From the beginning, the focus was on getting the levees fixed as quickly as possible, according to Dunstan.40

Other areas in the country that have been facing this problem have been protesting and fighting the Corps and FEMA, Dunstan said. Here, area leaders took a very different approach, working closely with the Corps and, in fact, suggesting that Southwestern Illinois lead the way and that the Corps use this area as an example and model for the rest of the country. Dunstan said that by taking a positive approach, he thinks the work can be fast-tracked. The issue, according to Dunstan, is not simply meeting the government mandates but making sure that the levees protect the area and provide a safe environment for people and businesses.41

“Our goal is to get these levees up to the 100-year level and ultimately to the 500-year level before those maps come out,” Dunstan said. Our goal is to try to have these levees fixed in four to five years.”42
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7. Schein.
15. Schein.
16. Schein.
24. Haine.
25. Haine.
27. Haine.
29. Haine.
30. Haine.
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32. Haine.
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About the Author

Alan Ortbals is co-owner, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the Illinois Business Journal. The IBJ focuses on business news, issues and trends affecting Southwestern Illinois. It’s been publishing for more than 8 years and has a circulation of 20,500.

Before going into the newspaper business, Ortbals spent nearly 20 years in economic development in the St. Louis region, starting as a commercial district manager for the St. Louis Office of Business Development; moving on to become Granite City, Illinois’ first economic development director; and then Executive Director of the Southwestern Illinois Development Authority. He began his career as a teacher and school administrator.

Ortbals holds degrees from St. Louis University and Webster University.
DISABILITY IN THE ST. LOUIS REGION
Stanley D. Brown

The picture above shows the new accessible ramp for the Soldiers Memorial in downtown St. Louis. On Memorial Day 2004, the weight of my power wheelchair and I broke the old mechanical lift that resembled a carnival ride. Not until Veterans Day 2007, 3 ½ years later, was the Soldiers Memorial again accessible for individuals in wheelchairs. During that time there were three television appearances on the problem, over five newspaper articles, and finally a deadline on mediation for an Americans with Disabilities Act complaint filed with the US Department of Justice.

This very personal experience begins to set forth what a very difficult challenge it is to be disabled in the Metropolitan St. Louis region. The experience also pales in comparison and significance to the adverse effects on the disabled community, seen with the Missouri 2005 Medicaid cuts, and the probability of reduced disability funding from governmental and private sources, with the end of this decade economic recession. On a positive note, several excellent advocacy and disability support organizations continue to serve the Metropolitan region. The coverage and services of these agencies, are however, often not coordinated as in the case of meeting transportation needs of the disabled. This article will address what, or more precisely who we are talking about, when we talk about the disability community and issues, and specifically address service, employment, transportation, Medicaid, and housing challenges the disabled in our region face. The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments was also passed and signed by the President in 2008, which was very good news for the disabled community throughout the United States. Lastly, 2009 and following years are predicted to exhibit difficult economic climates, which will adversely affect the disability community.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The 2000 decennial Census found more than 400,000 residents in the St. Louis region to be "persons with disabilities." These individuals accounted for 18% of the region’s population. The American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates for 2005-2007 provide more recent and more accurate data. For the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area (Metropolitan area), 15.1%
(387,676 persons) aged five and over, are disabled. Census and Survey (ACS) personnel acknowledge the 2000 data is inflated because of a design error in the sampling. Both the surveys measure only responses from non-institutionalized (nursing home residents are also not included) persons. The 15.1% and 387,676 are therefore low estimates of the disabled, not including those in nursing homes or institutions, that might be able to live in the community with assistance. The survey Metropolitan area was defined as the Missouri counties of Crawford, Franklin, Jefferson, Lincoln, St. Charles, St. Louis County and City, and Warren. The Illinois counties of Clinton, Jersey, Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair, are also considered part of the Metropolitan area. There is not one, universally accepted, single definition of disability. Most definitions view disability in terms of difficulty in performing daily tasks, work, and interaction with the environment. The Americans with Disabilities Act acknowledges these difficulties with the view that changes to the person’s environment (workplace accommodation, lifts on buses, accessible buildings, etc.) can diminish these barriers to disabled persons’ full participation in society. Persons with disabilities differ greatly by type and significance of disability; the U.S. Census Bureau classifies disabilities into the following seven categories: sensory, physical, mental, self-care, go-outside-home, employment, and the combination of two or more disabilities. By age distribution, the 21 to 64-year-old group, was the largest group, accounting for 49% of the disabled population.

In July of 1990, when President George H. Bush signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), there were 51.2 million Americans living with some level of disability, representing at that time 18% of the population. The U.S. Census Bureau has designed the ACS to replace the decennial Census long form. The 2007 Annual Disability Status Report from the survey (ACS) provides the most recent statewide Disability data. In 2007, the prevalence of disability in Missouri for persons aged five and older was 16.9%; in Illinois for 2007 it was 12.8%. By gender, 17.5% of females and 16.3% of males in Missouri reported a disability. In Illinois, 13.4% of females and 12.1% of males reported a disability. It is interesting that by gender analysis, female percentages are slightly higher in both states. The prevalence of disabilities by racial identification shows in Missouri that 25.1% of Native Americans surveyed indicate a disability, 19% of African-Americans, and 14.4% of Whites. These percentages are based upon working-age people (21 to 64). The Illinois breakout is similar, with 28% of Native Americans surveyed reporting any disability, 16.9% of African-Americans, and 9.6% of Whites.

SERVICING AGENCIES

The most comprehensive agencies/organizations serving the disabled in the Metropolitan area are the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) that operate both in Missouri and Illinois. In accordance with Chapter 1, Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, states administer federal grants for state independent living services programs, to include partial funding for CILs. The individual centers seek additional funding from private and governmental sources, and their own fundraising programs. The Independent Living movement began in the late 1960s as part of the Civil Rights movement. An original founder, a disabled student, was denied admission to the University of California at Berkeley because of his disability. He went to court over that decision and won, but was forced to live in the infirmary. The disabled student, Ed Roberts, organized with other students to advocate for accessible housing and personal assistant services. In response to their success, Centers for Independent Living began to form and receive governmental and private funding throughout the country. Centers are non-residential, not-for-profit, community-based organizations that provide core services to enable the disabled to live independently and participate in the community.
Metropolitan St. Louis CILs, unlike some other charity organizations in the region, have avoided any mention of financial impropriety. Several of the area centers boast of regional Better Business Bureau approval or "Honor Roll Charity" and "Wise Giving Guide" recognition. Most notably, Better Business Bureau approval requires meeting certain governance standards, to include annual strategic planning, and the charity's maintaining their tax-exempt 501(c) (3) status. Approval also demands a 65% program to expense ratio, whereby a charity must have 65% of their audited expenses designated as "program expenses" as opposed to "administrative" or "fundraising." Illinois and Missouri CILs are mandated to provide four core services: information and referral services, independent living skills training, peer counseling, and individual and systems advocacy. Missouri's State Plan for Independent Living goals for fiscal year 2007 are set forth below:

- GOAL 1: Implementation of The Olmstead Act through De-Institutionalization
- GOAL 2: Support and Promote Accessible Transportation for Missourians with Disabilities
- GOAL 3: Support and Promote Accessible, Affordable Housing for Missourians
- Goal 4: Promote Employment for People with Disabilities
- GOAL 5: Promote and Support Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities in Missouri
- GOAL 6: Explore options to make the SILC more independent and self-sustaining through a Resource Plan
- GOAL 7: To promote the participation of ethnic and minority individuals and groups in all aspects of independent living services and the independent living movement
- GOAL 8: To promote equitable voting for Missourians with Disabilities

Missouri CILs in the fiscal year 2007 reported 14,126 "significant disabilities" customers served during the fiscal year. The number of consumers in each category of disability is seen below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Consumers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Cognitive</td>
<td>463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Mental/Emotional</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Physical</td>
<td>7101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Hearing</td>
<td>1095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Vision</td>
<td>1042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Multiple Disabilities</td>
<td>4395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Other</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Missouri disabled consumers requested and were provided the following top five (23 total categories) services: 1) personal assistance services (57,574), 2) information and referral services (24,563), 3) peer counseling services (11,614), 4) transportation services (6878), and 5) independent living skills training and life skills training (2881).

The Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois is a not-for-profit, autonomous statewide planning organization, similar to those required of each state under the Rehabilitation Act. Like Missouri's Council, the organization develops a state plan for CILs and has the following vision statement: "We see an Illinois where persons with disabilities are independent, in control of their lives and free from barriers to full participation in society." The Council supervises 23 CILs in Illinois, and in its "Statement of Education and Policy Initiatives" for 2008, lists first the need for continued growth and full funding for the Home Service Program (Personal Assistants for disabled persons). Council legislative advocacy helped secure Illinois Personal Assistants' increases to $9.35 per hour in 2007. Council goals for FY 2008-2010 SILC are set forth below:

- **GOAL #1:** Ensure that the SILC membership has a cross-disability, cultural and regional representation.
- **GOAL #2:** Comprehensively review the allocation of Title VII, Parts B and C funds to the SILC and CILs in the State.
- **GOAL #3:** Continue the process of ensuring access to services to all persons with disabilities in the State's 93 counties currently served by the State's 23 CILs.
- **GOAL #4:** Increase service and program participation of unserved and underserved populations, including minority groups at CILs.
- **GOAL #5:** Assist CILs with training opportunities to better serve their consumers and communities.
- **GOAL #6:** Work with stakeholders on implementation of the Olmstead v. L.C. (1999) decision and the expansion of home- and community-based services in the State.
- **GOAL #7:** Continue to explore potential funding opportunities aimed at expanding “the provision of independent living services” in the State.

The Metropolitan area disabled have been well served by the CILs on both sides of the river. Paraquad serves both the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County. Founded in 1970, by longtime leading disability rights advocates, Max and Colleen Starkloff, Paraquad, like other CILs, is a private, not-for-profit, community-based organization. Its main purpose is to offer services that assist people with disabilities to live independently in society. Many of Paraquad's staff are themselves
disabled. This St. Louis organization is the leading disability advocacy agency in the area and has an established presence with the Missouri legislature. Paraquad and other CILs supervise and monitor Consumer Directed Services (CDS) programs for funding qualified (Medicaid eligible) disabled persons to hire caregivers enabling the disabled to remain living in the community.

The Delta Center serves the Missouri counties of St. Charles, Lincoln, and Warren. The Delta Center was formed in 1997 by citizens with disabilities and persons concerned about disability issues in the St. Charles area. The Center meets quarterly to discuss advocacy issues and formulate agendas to make the community inclusive and accessible. The Center provides transportation in the three counties to disabled consumers; the Center also administers the state and federally funded CDS program for residents. Disability Resource Association is the Jefferson County CIL. Its primary focus is "assisting each individual in maintaining an independent lifestyle while allowing them to reside in their own home."

Two CILs serve the Metropolitan region in Illinois. LINC was established in 1989 and serves St. Clair, Monroe, and Randolph counties. The main office is in Belleville; satellite offices are in Waterloo and Sparta. Home Services programs include community reintegration, personal assistant referral services, home modification and a "puppet ministry" used as an innovative and educational method teaching disability awareness in overcoming stigmas. LINC also sponsors an Equipment Loan Program as part of the Paraquad Assistive Technology Reutilization Program. The program makes available for temporary use and permanent possession, used wheelchairs, shower benches, walkers, canes, and other adaptive devices. IMPACT is the Illinois CIL that serves Madison, Calhoun, Jersey, Greene, Macoupin, and Bond counties. Over 50% of their board is disabled. Their consumer services programs include: home services in the form of personal assistants, community reintegration, low vision/blind services, amplified phone and a TTY Selection Center, youth services, rural services, and pharmaceutical assistance. IMPACT serves a diverse catchment area of old industry towns in Madison County and rural areas in the surrounding counties. IMPACT also runs a strong advocacy program and distributes an "Impact Advocate" newsletter.

TARGETED DISABILITY AGENCIES

There are numerous organizations and agencies that focus on specific diseases and disabilities. These societies and charities offer valuable support and referrals for the disabled and their families. In addition to governmental and medical definitions of"disabilities" and "disability categories," a common broad distinction is made between "developmental" and "non-developmental" or "physical" disability. The CILs advocate and serve both populations. Specifically focused organizations, like St. Louis ARC, serve people with developmental disabilities and their families. Developmental disability is a term that includes disabilities that occur in the years before age 22; it can be caused by a mental or physical impairment or a combination of the two. These disabilities are lifelong and may include mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, Down Syndrome, or Prader-Willi Syndrome. ARC provides support services to more than 3000 adults and children in the area and was founded in St. Louis in 1950. The Gateway Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), is one of 34 national chapters, and serves 640 members in Missouri and the St. Louis Metropolitan Area in Illinois. Members are veterans with spinal cord injury or disease that were injured on active duty, or after being honorably discharged. Their mission is to advocate for veterans’ healthcare, advocate and assist in securing veterans’ benefits, sponsor and promote their members’ involvement in the community, and support spinal cord research.

The Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities has both north and south regional
offices that offer services and programs for eligible persons with developmental disabilities. It's interesting to note, and perhaps indicative as will be discussed later in this article, that the St. Louis Region Division website lists numerous "available services," but provides a caveat that "due to limitations on the availability of funding," the division is "unable to immediately provide services to all individuals with disabilities."

**TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation remains a problem for the disabled in our community, strikingly so for those unable to afford their own accessible vehicle and driver. In January 2005, the Starkloff Disability Institute reported to the East-West Gateway Council of Governments (Council) on the state of transportation services for people with disabilities in the St. Louis Metropolitan region. Focus group and survey respondents expressed a common, shared, goal, and that was: "Individuals with disabilities have the right to equality, independence, and full participation in society." As 2009 begins, the transit system in the St. Louis region of MetroBus, MetroLink, and Metro Call-a-Ride, face significant budget deficits that may disproportionally result in service cuts for disabled riders. This forecast is extremely troublesome because the public transit system was already not meeting the needs of the disabled community prior to the 2008 budget problems.

The Council contracted with the Starkloff Disability Institute, and with the help of federal transportation funding, the Institute examined the transportation accessibility issues on both sides of the Mississippi River in the St. Louis region. Max Starkloff, a quadriplegic himself, cofounded with his wife, Colleen, the Starkloff Disability Institute in 2003. At the end of the transportation study, Access to Independence, Starkloff commented that the most frustrating aspect to public transportation for disabled persons was the same as it’s been for 30 years, and that was the negative, unhelpful attitude disabled riders faced from drivers and service personnel. The study summarized three major challenges for the public transportation system and local governments: 1) People without disabilities have difficulty comprehending the problems that people with disabilities have regarding transportation; 2) Local governments’ compliance with the ADA and related laws is very uneven; and 3) Jurisdictional and bureaucratic barriers create seemingly unnecessary bottlenecks in the flow of transportation services. Along with these challenges, the study provided numerous examples that came from eight focus groups and mailed surveys. By Metro’s own assessment, 80% of the transit stops in the area were not accessible to wheelchairs. In measuring
customer service, Metro bus, train, and Call-A-Ride drivers, as well as call center operators, were often found to be rude and condescending. Blind persons and persons with developmental disabilities had particular problems with street crossings and communicating with drivers. Local governments’ view to ADA planning and compliance on transportation issues, was to "add-on" to the basic plan, seeking funding compliance somewhere else. In sum, ADA and related laws were not on management checklists, and not a priority in construction, maintenance and operational programs. Transportation agencies serving the disabled were required to stop at jurisdictional limits, even though the most cost-efficient and logical flow of the trips, may cross those lines. Separate funding sources created disparities in service to different regions of the Metropolitan area. In response to the three challenges and numerous examples of problems, the study recommended solutions that incorporated disability group input in future transportation planning that addressed disability needs upfront, and stressed the importance of educational programs that explain the transportation barriers for disabled persons. ADA compliance in the transportation planning process was recommended to be an integral part of the planning. Local government coordination and inter-jurisdictional arrangements were recommended to improve disabled service, as well as, regulations and legislation to ensure the safe movement of persons. It was recommended that the Council coordinate implementing the proposed solutions.

One of the responsibilities of the Board of Directors of the Council is to oversee the development of transportation plans for the region, to include the Missouri counties of Franklin, Jefferson, St. Charles, St. Louis County and City of St. Louis, and Madison, Monroe and St. Clair counties in Illinois. In addition to responding to the Starkloff Disability Institute study, the Council was required to develop a Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan in response to an August 10, 2005 federal transportation law entitled the "Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users." The law built upon two previous transportation bills. The Council was required to produce a regional planning tool that would guide investment of funding administered through the Council, to include all federal transportation funding. In an effort to coordinate the 64 federal programs providing transportation funding for the elderly, people with disabilities, and low income individuals, in February 2004, President Bush signed an Executive Order establishing a federal transportation coordinating council on access and mobility. That Order drove the coordination requirements and cost savings (effectiveness) mandates that filtered down to regional planning agencies like the East-West Gateway Council of Governments.

In addition to the Starkloff Disability Institute 2005 Access to Independence study, the Institute produced a June 2007 Access to Jobs and New Freedom Planning study. Both were used in the Council regional plan development required by the new transportation laws and Executive Order. In developing the St. Louis Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, the Council held five stakeholder meetings between April 2007 and April 2008. Stakeholders discussed regional demographics, system assets, unmet needs and gaps in services, strategies for establishing funding priorities, and a competitive process for selecting projects. Many transportation providers for the disabled, both publicly and privately owned, serve the St. Louis metropolitan area. Fixed route and paratransit (Call-A-Ride) providers are Metro operated both in the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County. In Illinois there is the Madison County Transit System and the St. Clair County Transit District. St. Charles has St. Charles Area Transit. Other private transit systems and non-profit transportation providers add to the fixed-route public transportation, usually offering a great deal more flexibility and response to the disabled community. The studies and the Council concluded all people, to include the disabled population, living in smaller cities and rural areas, often don’t have regular transit
services and have limited alternative options. Almost counter intuitively, the ADA only requires paratransit service within 3/4 of a mile from fixed-route transit.  

Beginning 2009, discussions on St. Louis area Metro transit reductions in bus routes for cost savings will have an increased negative effect on the disabled. Metro service cuts are scheduled for March 2009; the exact cuts are unknown at the time of the writing of this article. Those disabled may not only lose their fixed-route bus transportation, Call-A-Ride services for people with disabilities will go away because they will no longer be within ¾ of a mile from a Metro bus stop or fixed route. Disabled riders living in these outlying areas especially need other transportation options. Many disabled are already unable to access public transportation because of the bus stop conditions. Metro was encouraged to continue their Bus Stop Accessibility Project, but 2008-2009 budget shortfalls may delay those repairs. Metro did receive grant funds from the Council for bus stop enhancements, and beginning in spring 2009 intends to upgrade approximately 150 stops in Missouri.

The Council summarized their fact-finding and studies by saying there were over 100 transportation services, serving an area population of 2.48 million. Transportation redundancies were throughout the area and the lack of available resources, coupled with different funding and eligibility requirements, make sharing resources and coordinating services difficult. Regardless, service gaps and unmet transportation needs for people with disabilities and others exist in the current transportation system. Five separate strategies for addressing regional coordination needs were identified:

- Maintain existing and ensure that transportation services do not fall below the current level for transportation-disadvantaged people in the St. Louis region.
- Enhance mobility options for transportation-disadvantaged populations in the region.
- Expand education and outreach on existing services.
- Improve communication and coordination between human service agencies and transportation providers.
- Improve safety and accessibility of transit services.

EMPLOYMENT

Census disability reports and American Community Survey data have historically tracked the disability unemployment rate to be around 70% in the United States. The most recent (2005-2007) ACS data for the St. Louis Metropolitan area shows a 61.4% unemployment rate for the disabled compared to a 23.1% rate for those not disabled. The National Organization on Disability/Harris Survey indicates that between 65% and 70% of disabled persons of working age, wanting to work, were unemployed. The President's 2003 New Freedom Commission survey finds a 60% unemployment rate for adults with mental illness. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 asserts that "no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination" under programs or entities that receive federal financial assistance or is conducted by an executive agency of the United States. Millions of disabled Americans, and thousands of Missouri and Illinois disabled residents who want to work, are unemployed. Researchers from Rutgers and the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University in a 2006 study, stated that 80% of non-employed working age people with disabilities would like a paid job compared to 78% of non-disabled working age persons. The high unemployment rate for the disabled cannot be attributed to lack of motivation.  

The Council's May 2004, St. Louis Regional Accessibility Report found people with disabili-
ties lagged far behind their non-disabled counterparts in getting a basic and higher education. This difference obviously affects the disability community employment possibilities, especially when considering physical disabilities often render an individual unable to compete in traditional labor or "blue-collar" positions requiring certain physical skills. Education levels correlate with labor force participation rates of those with a disability. The more education a disabled person has, the greater likelihood of employment. The Council report found only 17.8% of employed disabled persons had less than a high school degree, and 53.4% of those employed had 16 or more years of education. Persons with developmental disabilities disproportionately find employment in "shelter" or agency run programs, which are not necessarily undesirable, but do not lead to a career or economic advancement.

As part of the Starkloff Disability Institute's 2007 Access to Jobs and New Freedom Planning study, six metropolitan disability agencies were surveyed on unemployment. A small (49) but urban and rural diverse response, was received that indicated 50% of non-developmentally disabled respondents were working and 100% of the developmentally disabled respondents were working. Responses in that group were from the developmentally disabled or persons on their behalf. The income those individuals reported was from sponsored or subsidized work programs, usually in shelter programs. Responses from those with physical disabilities were likely to come from persons not in shelter programs.

With intense advocacy from Missouri disability organizations, the Ticket to Work Health Insurance Program (HB 39 Portwood) was passed and signed into law effective August 2007. The program will assist individuals joining the work force by providing access to healthcare and personal attendant services, while working and earning a basic salary. It was premised upon the fact that persons earning low wages could not afford large medical premiums, and the reality that adequate healthcare coverage is needed for an individual to improve their health and maintain their ability to work. To qualify for the program, an individual had to make less than 350% of the Federal Poverty Line and have a net income of not more than 85% of the Federal Poverty Line after "disregards" or deductions. Estimates indicate that up to 3000 Missourians would qualify for program participation.
HOUSING AND THE OLMSTEAD PROMISE

Based on 2005-2007 ACS estimates, 15.1% or almost 400,000 individuals in the St. Louis Metropolitan area population are disabled persons. Accessible housing is one of the greatest and most common problems they encounter. Most buildings, government and private, open for public use, constructed after January 26, 1992, must be accessible and meet ADA guidelines. Universal design guidance for accessibility from the ADA is not mandatory for new home construction or modification. In the City of St. Louis, the housing stock is old but architecturally attractive, and most of the buildings cannot accommodate people with disabilities. The Missouri Housing Development Commission (MHCD), Missouri’s housing finance agency, was the first such state agency in the nation to require the use of universal design in housing built with its funds. It administers a $5M Trust Fund for developing affordable multifamily housing in Missouri. In 2001 a citizen group established the City of St. Louis Affordable Housing Commission to promote the development of safe, affordable, accessible housing in the City of St. Louis. Colleen Starkloff served as the Commission’s founding Chairperson; Max Starkloff headed the St. Louis County Commission on Disability in 2003. Both Commissions ensure that new home construction funded with Trust Fund money, follows universal design principles. In addition, County new construction or gut rehabilitation of single or multifamily homes for sale or rent, built with Community Development Block Grant or HOME funds distributed by St. Louis County, must be universally designed. Disabled persons with substantial resources can build or modify their homes for accessibility, but many people with disabilities are living below the poverty line. Major paradigm shifts need to be embraced, to provide accessible, community-based housing for the disabled in the area.

The Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing Opportunity Council is tasked with local and federal funding, to ensure the Fair Housing Act requirements are met. One of the requirements is that new (built after March 1991) multifamily buildings with four or more units, must be designed and constructed in a manner that disabled persons do not face use barriers. Filed in 2007, and still pending, is their lawsuit against 40 new condominium developments in the Lake of the Ozarks area, none of which complied with accessibility provisions of the Fair Housing Act.

December 24, 2008, the day before Christmas, a 95-year-old woman was found dead in her wheelchair in the early morning
cold and rain, outside a nursing home in Florissant, Missouri. The resident, who did not smoke, was found in an outside smoking area and courtyard of the nursing home. Family members say their mother was ill and would have been unable to access the doors necessary to go outside. Although the story is one of sensational headline (and there have been many more) there can be little doubt that many disabled in the Metropolitan area reside in nursing homes and institutional settings, that deny them minimum human dignity and independence.

On June 22, 1999, the US Supreme Court in its Olmstead v. L.C. decision ruled that under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the unjustifiable institutionalization of a person with a disability is prohibited. The case was brought by two Georgia women with dual diagnoses, who were living in a state-run institution receiving mental health services. The women were living in the institutional setting, despite the fact medical professionals had evaluated both women and found them capable of living in a community-based setting. The Court ruled the ADA required persons with disabilities be offered housing options in the most integrated setting out in the community. This mandate applies to persons in nursing facilities, institutional care facilities, group homes, and state schools for the disabled. Ruling that the "institutionalization" of the disabled in these settings, severely limits their ability to interact with family and friends, to work, and to make a life for themselves, states are mandated to provide community options if three basic conditions for the placement can be met.

The Olmstead decision does not directly concern the Medicaid program, but Medicaid comprises a large percentage of long-term care appropriations found in state healthcare expenditures, and represents a vested interest for the nursing home lobby and institutions receiving Medicaid funding. Medicaid, as currently administered, presents a fundamental conflict in fully implementing the Olmstead promise, enabling the disabled to live in the community in the most integrated setting. The Medicaid program exhibits an “institutional bias” for disabled poor to reside in nursing homes or institutional settings. Medicaid does not cover several "therapies" (physical, occupational, etc) if delivered inside a person's home. Hospital staff and physicians when discharging patients, are usually aware of nursing home options, but not community-based programs that might enable someone to live at home. As the individuals leave Medicaid funded nursing homes and facilities, their funding dollars are supposed to follow them to their community housing. Many nursing homes and institutional settings, could not survive without substantial Medicaid funding coming from their patients. These institutions have strong lobbies in Washington, D.C.14 With a full plate of issues for the new Presidential administration, Olmstead advocates can only hope new initiatives will be forthcoming to ensure disabled and elderly Americans truly have a choice of whether they live in a private home or a nursing facility or institution.

The Olmstead Stakeholders Group was formed in 2000 in Missouri in response to an executive order by then Governor Mel Carnahan. The group is a statewide coalition of disability rights advocates that have been meeting with federal and state officials since February 2000. The group has advocated and lobbied for Olmstead-related legislation and budget items, and served on state Olmstead committees. Much of the work was around "informed choices" in creating training materials for volunteers to go to nursing homes and talk to residents about their options, but the group has not been active in four years.
ADA AMENDMENT ACT

On September 25, 2008, the ADA Amendments Act was signed into law with an effective date of January 1, 2009, 19 years after the original ADA was signed into law by President George W. Bush’s father. The Amendments were supported by over 220 national organizations, including the US Chamber of Commerce, the American Society of Employers, the National Association of Manufacturers, veterans’ groups, and disability organizations. The ADA needed amending when, starting in 1999, the US Supreme Court began narrowing the definition of "disability" for purposes of disabled persons' protections for ADA violations. Court decisions stated that in determining a disability for purposes in pursuing a claim, possible mitigating measures (corrective lens, medications, hearing aids, and prosthetic devices) needed to be considered before deciding if an impairment is substantially limiting one or more of a person’s life activities. Other Supreme Court cases gave new definition to the ADA "substantially limits" test to mean "considerably" or "to a large degree." Disability advocate criticism of the Supreme Court decisions was that the ADA interpretation for disabled persons had focused on the definition of disability in a limiting fashion, and not on access and accommodation as originally intended in the ADA.

The new ADA Amendments Act attempts to clarify the "disability" definition to be construed in favor of broad coverage to the maximum extent permitted and redefine "substantially limits" to be interpreted with the intent of the original ADA. An impairment that substantially limits one major life activity need not limit other major life activities. Impairments that are episodic, or in remission, could still be considered a disability if it met the "substantially limited in major life activity" rest, when active. Under the Amendments, only corrective lens and contact lens that fully correct visual impediments are considered mitigating measures affecting a person’s disability status for purposes of ADA protection and lawsuits. Labor law specialists are predicting numerous ADA cases for accessible work accommodation and wrongful discharge that were not considered in the past, will now again provide protection for disabled persons.

MEDICAID PROBLEMS AND THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

The end of this decade’s economic woes on the federal, state, and local level, all point to problems for the disabled community. The Missouri legislature in response to Governor Matt Blunt's initiative, made significant changes in 2005 to the Medicaid program in Missouri. There was a disproportionate, negative, impact on persons with disabilities from these Medicaid cuts. The cuts threatened the ability of disabled poor persons to live independently and actively participate in their communities. The Missouri Department of Social Services estimated that over 9000 working people with disabilities would lose Medicaid coverage completely as a result of the cuts. Enrollment for the aged, blind, and disabled decreased by 14,655 the first five months of the implementation of the cuts in 2005. The Department reported a 15,152 disabled persons enrollment drop from July 2005 to December 2007, representing 9% of the Missouri disabled persons in the Medicaid program. These numbers do not include the thousands of disabled Missourians maintaining Medicaid only by increasing their “spend-downs,” creating greater financial problems. One of the cuts reduced disabled persons’ Medicaid eligibility from 100% to 85% of the Federal Poverty Level, which left disabled persons at that time only $678 (spend-down amount) per month to pay for their housing, utility, transportation, and living expense. The St. Louis Disability Coalition on Healthcare Reform's 2009 Life on Medicaid Spenddown details the effects of the reductions and provides recommendations to include increasing the Medicaid Eligibility Limit to 100% of the Federal Poverty Level. An-
other cut was the Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities program, which was eliminated, removing in several cases the financial incentive to work for fear of losing Medicaid health coverage. In addition, medically necessary services and equipment for disabled persons are deemed no longer required by Missouri law, but rather subject to budget appropriations each year. The Missouri legislature did include several items (wheelchairs for one) and services in the following budget years. At the time of the 2005 healthcare cuts, the Missouri Budget Project estimated 68.2% of Missourians opposed the Medicaid cuts.

The Missouri Health Improvement Act of 2007 (Senate Bill 577) was negotiated with several groups, passed, and signed into law as a comprehensive Medicaid reform measure. It repealed the existing sunset provision of the Medicaid program in Missouri. It was designed to reshape the Medicaid program in Missouri and provide managed care in three health plan options. The program became operational July 1, 2008 and by July 1, 2009 enrollment of the disabled population should begin. The plan outline envisions moving the aged, blind, and disabled populations into service delivery models. The plan involves intensive care management that will require community level engagement with stakeholders participating in the development of the new model. The next few years will judge the effectiveness of this reform on what was Medicaid assistance delivery for those disabled in the community.

THE END OF DECADE RECESSION AND GOVERNMENTAL FUNDING PROBLEMS

On the last day of 2008, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch ran a front-page article entitled "Recession may exacerbate Medicaid problems.” The article said the federal Medicaid program is spread thin, and the Kaiser Family Foundation predicted that nationwide enrollment in public health insurance for low-income Americans will dramatically increase in 2009 as the economic recession continues. Missouri patients have complained fewer doctors are now willing to accept Medicaid, and finding a specialist is even more difficult. Missouri Social Services Department spokespersons respond that the new Missouri HealthNet has staff that will help Medicaid patients finding doctors. In November 2008, the Wall Street Journal predicted state budget shortfalls would force reductions in home care for low income residents, resulting in inevitable moves to nursing homes, in direct contrast to the Olmstead promise.

The recession and declines in Missouri General Revenue have heightened concerns that the services for Missouri's poor, elderly, and disabled, will be decreased by necessity during the time of the economic downturn. Missouri's three most significant revenue sources are declining. Individual Income Tax, State Sales and Use taxes, and State Corporate Income and Franchise Tax collections, all point to the state facing budget shortfalls probably in 2009, 2010 and definitely in 2011. The decline in state revenue and resulting reduction of services is especially troublesome for the disabled who will also individually suffer from the economic climate. The revenue picture will make it more difficult for state and local lawmakers to meet the increased needs of the disabled community during the recession. Federal stimulus packages in 2009 may provide some relief in the form of increased federal payments for Medicaid; one such proposal authorized an additional $1.5 billion increase over two years to the Missouri program.

The Illinois state budget crisis looks no better. At the end of 2008, over 20 state parks and historic sites were forced to close, and with the closed facilities, workers were laid off. Illinois has become a late payer; state revenue and fees have been moved to cover other expenses, resulting in
hospitals, pharmacists, and human-service providers not receiving timely state payment for services. The Illinois State Comptroller announced his office was roughly $4 billion behind in payments to nursing homes, state contractors, and others. In addition to the late state payments for services and doctors not accepting Medicaid patients, the difficult credit market adversely affects those services and businesses' ability to bridge the gap with borrowing. The disabled poor in Illinois will no doubt suffer as medical services and providers opt out to no longer accept Medicaid payment from the State. Political gridlock with the state legislature on budget issues, and the December 2008 federal criminal indictment and 2009 impeachment of the Governor, diminish the opportunity for an effective state government response to the economic recession. Service reduction for the Illinois disabled will be affected.
Endnotes
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Chapter 7
“A Municipal Art Commission:”
The Search for a St. Louis Identity

The fifth planning report of the 1907 plan was from the Municipal Art Committee that was chaired by J. Lawrence Mauran. The main task of the report was to convince St. Louisans that the citizens should create a municipal arts commission to oversee the design of public works projects to insure that they had the “proper artistic treatment and harmony.” Citing a spate of private construction that had recently transformed much of downtown with architecturally impressive buildings like the Wainwright building and produced beautiful new residential enclaves like Compton Heights and the Central West End “under the supervision of skilled architects and engineers,” the committee argued that “when we turn to the common and larger home—the city itself—and examine public structures, buildings, bridges, and general street adornments built at public expense and for public purposes, the same skilled supervision is found to be seriously lacking.”

The answer Mauran and the committee explained was to follow the lead of a number of other cities like New York, Chicago, Boston, Detroit, Baltimore, Denver, and Los Angeles and create an advisory commission that would comment on any proposed public works. “Everywhere,” Mauran told his fellow St. Louisans, “cities are seeking not only the useful but the harmonious and the architecturally beautiful in public works of every kind.” “A city,” he remarked, “if it would be truly great, must not only be commercially powerful but also attractive to those who reside within its limits and to those who visit it for pleasure or business.” As he pointed out, if St. Louis would have had such a commission in the past, the city would not have place the new city hall (1898) “in the midst of unsightly and dilapidated buildings” nor would the Old Court House “have been marred by a coat of paint.”

But for the Municipal Arts Committee, the proposed Municipal Arts Commission and the goal of making the city beautiful was “not merely art for art’s sake.” It was about making the city more attractive and more commercially prominent. “But more than all,” Moran exclaimed, “it arouses a civic spirit among all the people and creates a pride in the city.” For him, “a citizen’s love of the city is not an abstract sentiment, it attaches itself to the beautiful in the city.”

However, the reason why the report is so important and why it speaks volumes to St. Louisans today is that the ultimate goal of the committee was not merely instilling some “boosteristic” sense of pride in place, but in energizing the citizenry to accomplish new feats for St. Louis. This was why Mauran emphasized that the contemplated works of public art include historical commemorations of such events as Laclede’s founding of the city and the Lewis and Clark expedition. According to him and the committee, “if we would have our people united for the upbuilding [sic] of St. Louis, we should surround them with illustrations of the city’s greatness.”

In short, what the municipal arts commission represented to Mauran and the committee was the conscious process of creating a shared civic identity. As Mauran put it, through art and the artistic treatment of public works, “the city would cultivate the noblest aspirations of the people, who would grow to consider the municipality not merely as a temporary dwelling place but as a desirable home and a city with whose greatness they are proud to be identified.”

Of course, for contemporary St. Louisans, the search for identity is more—or at least it should be more—than simply a matter of urban design or branding. Our identity should be a matter of who we are and what we believe rather than just being proud of the Arch or the
Cardinals. It should be about our values and what kind of society we want the region to be. In other words, transforming the region should be about transforming ourselves.

So while the concept of a municipal arts commission may seem trivial today, the notion of civic identity is critically important. Attitudes shape many elements of our daily lives, the decisions we make, and the standards to which we hold ourselves and our leaders. Our three authors speak to how identity and attitudes shape our region. Debra Moore starts the chapter with a thoughtful essay that examines the notion of identity in a city that has an identity crisis—East St. Louis. That small city at the center of Metro East has struggled mightily with some of the toughest social problems present in the region (past and present). The city almost has a dual identity. On the one hand, the city has an internal identity characterized by pride in an industrial past, but on the other hand, it is shaped by an external identity that disregards the city as a viable place. As the rest of the region moves forward with bold initiatives, East St. Louis remains isolated in plain sight. Moore rightly questions whether or not the region is truly successful when the least among us is so far behind.

Andrew Theising's essay attempts to explain the region and its decisions by looking at state political cultures. He draws on the work of Daniel Elazar, who wrote the earliest and most significant scholarship on state political cultures. Missouri and Illinois bring two distinct forces together at the St. Louis region—with Southern-style traditionalistic culture coming through Missouri and Eastern-style individualistic culture coming from Illinois. Taken together, these two forces create a social and political dynamic that is alive and well in the bi-state region. Theising demonstrates how political culture explains generational politics and the Hancock Amendment in Missouri, and political corruption and a governor's impeachment in Illinois. He also explains how this culture explains racism, too. Despite different cultures, Missouri and Illinois can connect in meaningful and productive ways. Theising calls the region's cultural diversity a strength, and makes the case that the Mississippi River is the middle of the region, not the edge.

The most poignant essay in this publication comes from Bob Hansman. Professor Hansman teaches an architecture course that brings suburban students to urban neighborhoods. As Hansman’s story unfolds, we see through students’ eyes how fear of difference becomes admiration for diversity. It echoes back to the thought raised by Debra Moore’s essay—the idea that identity can be shaped externally. Hansman's story takes that point a step further. It illustrates that external identity can be shaped, can evolve, and in the end, can be transformed. In many ways, it articulates the hope and promise that is St. Louis. This essay is by far the longest one in the entire book, but the editors made the conscious choice not to reduce its size out of admiration for its message and the fear that in editing the article, the message might somehow be diminished. Even editors, sometimes, need to edit “like a lover.”
COMMUNITY IDENTITY
Debra H. Moore

DEFINING COMMUNITY IDENTITY
Community identity is ultimately the interaction between people that is inextricably tied to how place affects the way people function. In the operation of a city one of two things can occur that contribute to shaping its identity. Strong community consciousness often an attribute of cities with strong rules that are purposed to serve the greater good can encourage cohesion and stability. Conversely, cities as free standing entities can allow its autonomy to encourage social isolation and distrust. The cities that will be briefly discussed reflect cohesion that contributed to a positive identity and autonomy that contributed to a negative identity.

THE ROLE OF REGIONALISM
Communities, as individual sources of identity can be defined by their geography, history, and culture. The communities of East St. Louis and St. Louis, if viewed through the lens of regionalism, offer unique insight into the concept of community identity. The initial challenge is to determine each community’s place in the St. Louis region. The first problem, however, is to operationalize region. Multiple organizations exist, each with its own definition of the region, accompanied by each organizations clarion call for greater regionalism. One wonders if the selected configuration is motivated by an interest for the citizens of the “region” or simply the agenda of the respective organization. These regional actors include business groups, councils of governments, public–private partnerships, philanthropic organizations, civic organizations, social services organizations and a citizens’ league.¹

Unfortunately, this collective of regional actors have not proven useful for understanding community identity. They have been successful in presenting the St. Louis region as multiple configurations of eight, twelve or sixteen counties that span parts of the two states of Illinois and Missouri. Regardless of how the St. Louis region is defined, few will dispute that the Mississippi River is its focal point. The river is shared by two states and two cities that are primary geographies in defining the region, East St. Louis and St. Louis. These cities share the river as a common border but their identities are starkly different.
Although, they parallel the river and each city has been adversely impacted by a diminished core due to peripheral growth, the two gateway cities seem a world apart. St. Louis benefited from its incorporation, being built upon the social contract that protected the interests and met the expectations of the city’s citizens. The contract naturally facilitated the development of residential enclaves that were supported by the social amenities often established by the companies that called St. Louis home. St. Louis is home to a plethora of institutions and cultural centers established and supported by corporate interests. St. Louis enjoys the competitive advantage that accompanies cultural institutions that attract “new businesses and corporate elites.”

FOREVER SHAPED BY IT’S PAST

East St. Louis, on the other hand, is St. Louis’ industrial suburb a “workbench, the repository for the unattractive yet essential elements of urban life.” Industrial suburbs are incorporated places purposed to facilitate the interest of industry rather than the provision of a quality of life consistent with the expectations of its citizens. Industry used government to protect its “wealth from taxation and general government interference.” The success of the industrial suburb was inextricably tied to the success of the industry that the suburb housed. The ability of the industrial suburb to meet the needs of its residents is nearly wholly dependent on the success of the industry and the tax revenues that industry generates. Industrial suburbs are mutations of the Lockean theory of government that is directed toward the “peace, safety, and good of the people.”

John Locke, an English philosopher was most influential in the establishment of government in the United States. Locke’s natural rights theory was intertwined with the social contract. Natural rights are those rights that individuals are supposed to have as human beings before government comes into being. Locke’s argument was that because of natural rights, government comes into being when people agree that their condition in the state of nature is unsatisfactory, and they in turn agree to transfer some of their rights to a central government, while retaining others. This is the theory of the social contract. Familiar with Locke’s concept of the social contract the framers developed a constitution that was “an agreement between people to exchange private power for public power” a social contract. This concept devolved to charters of municipal governments evidenced by the opening line “We the people.”

Unlike St. Louis, East St. Louis’ development was void of the benefits of the companies located within its geography improving the quality of life for its citizens. Instead, they directly influenced East St. Louis’ political environment as builders of a corrupt culture that has permeated the city and its institutions for decades. The government of East St. Louis was not intent on developing a social environment, but an institutional environment where its leaders did not reflect societal demands. To establish the city as an effective industrial suburb, it was necessary for industry to exercise a level of control over city leaders. Without control, industry could not affect tax assessment, zoning, and law enforcement; that was best accomplished through municipal corruption, bribery and backroom agreements.

WHAT ACTIONS YIELD

East St. Louis’ coherence derived from laws and rules was constrained by its autonomy as a free standing entity that was exactly what industry wanted. Without a “healthy respect for the law or the good of society,” East St. Louis plunged into machine politics as its operating mantra. The city’s capacity to channel resources to achieve goals was derailed by the city’s failure to try
resulting in self-gain in this case for industry and local leaders.\textsuperscript{11} Political will is evident when “politics is organized by a logic of appropriateness.”\textsuperscript{12} Under this order the interrelated rules and routines are learned and followed and result in political institutions realizing “order, stability and predictability.”\textsuperscript{13} East St. Louis’s political institutions instead adapted a logic of consequentiality where behavior was willful and reflected an “attempt to make outcomes fulfill subjective desires.”\textsuperscript{14}

The pro-business environment of East St. Louis’ government was effective in attracting industry, but could not sustain industry. This non-local investment, that at one time caused the city to flourish as a destination point for jobs, had no local interest and, when the city was no longer profitable, had no problem exiting. Industries exit left behind a dysfunctional municipal government with no tax base to support its citizens.

East St. Louis’ quality of life, as a result of these series of events, made it an unattractive place that was shunned by its citizens and other governmental and regional entities. Fixes for the city’s ills came from a distance, and usually included an extraction of some needed element from city control. Machine style politics, however, continued in the face of a middle class exodus and declining tax base. Upheld by the machine, the city reflected a facade that all was well when the twentieth century city was drowning in the mire of corruption and mismanagement. Although it was recognized as an All American City in 1959, East St. Louis was far from that and was already on the skids, reflected by its increase in welfare programs, making the significance of the award questionable.

The face of political leadership changed in 1971 with the election of James E. Williams its first African-American mayor; however, he along with those that followed him seemedly fell into an abyss of power that resulted in greater loss for the city. East St. Louis had managed to stay above water with its manipulation of the millions of federal dollars that it received. The practice of patronage and mismanagement of funds resulted in those dollars being removed from the city’s control. Because of its practices the city lost control of its Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and the anti-poverty programs, that were all transferred to St. Clair County control.

The ultimate loss was the city’s loss of financial control with the establishment of the Financial Advisory Authority (FAA) that remains as the oversight entity established through legislation in 1990. The FAA was to provide financial management assistance, assure fiscal integrity, and oversee the financial affairs
of East St. Louis to bring the city to a level of performance that reflected a capacity to manage its own affairs. Success will be realized when the city is able to achieve ten successive years of balanced budgets. The fact that the city remains under FAA oversight is a reflection of its continued failure.

FINDING A PLACE IN THE REGION

Structural economic and leadership change is required if East St. Louis is to become a viable community that can be trusted. The lack of trust has caused the city to be “passed over, ignored and disregarded as a viable place.”

East St. Louis should be a more effective regional player if for no reason other than its location. The city’s position could be enhanced if there was a new posture of cooperation. East St. Louis officials must come to an understanding that they do not own government, but are stewards to ensure the provision of quality services to its residents.

East St. Louis was created not as a competitor but as a supporter of the industrial needs of St. Louis. The city’s viability was limited to its value to industry rather than to St. Louis. East St. Louis was, and continues to be for many, shunned and viewed as a forbidden disengaged place, while the suburbs evolve. Many fail to remember that the city was once home to what is now the regional council of governments. The departure was certainly influenced by the actions of local political actors who were not promoters of regional cooperation, but instead worked to maintain their preferred institutional arrangements. The city’s political institutions were ineffective as promoters of regional cooperation because they were shaped by the political conflict that they would be expected to help alleviate.

The regional response to East St. Louis has been a “natural sorting of people into separate local governments with people like themselves who have similar preferences for taxes and public services.” This economic segregation gives rise to overall inequality and “uneven access to amenities and opportunities.” The region’s suburbs have little desire to interact with the city “having escaped the central city, suburban residents do not want to contribute their time, energy, and certainly not their tax dollars to help.”

It is acceptable for the city to be left alone with its minorities, and the political strife that permeates its institutions that sustain an environment “where personal and cultural dysfunction breeds economic failure.” A voluntary recognition by all and possibly a new clarion call that keeping poverty in the cities does not benefit the region but has a negative effect could be the a step toward a new community identity.
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About the Author

Debra H. Moore is executive director of the St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department. She is a former assistant professor of political science at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. She received the Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Missouri St. Louis. She also completed the Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Dr. Moore has extensive public policy experience and has worked with diverse groups to address issues of regional concern. She has led or participated in the development of organizations that have promoted cooperation between government and the private sector; and the development of regional approaches to problems facing the St. Louis metropolitan area.
The St. Louis metropolitan area has long berated itself for being too passive, too reflective, too slow—and sometimes a region stuck in (or on) its past. To be certain, this criticism is rooted in truth. The St. Louis region changes at a glacier’s pace, but this does not have to be a detrimental factor—a point to be revisited at the conclusion of this essay. The criticism also speaks to one of the most significant political issues in the metropolitan region: the Mississippi River and the state line it represents. Its power is subtle, but it is probably the single-greatest challenge to St. Louis acting in a regional way. Though St. Louis possesses several dynamic regional organizations like FOCUS St. Louis, Bi-State Development Agency (Metro), the Regional Chamber and Growth Association, and East-West Gateway Council of Governments, which would all substantiate the argument that the river is the middle of the region, in the attitude of many the river is the edge, not the middle. Missouri and Illinois represent different power structures, different capacities, different expectations, and different demands. At a fundamental level, Missouri and Illinois are very different places. This difference is readily explained by the work of the late scholar Daniel Elazar. In his landmark work *American Federalism: The View from the States* (1966), Elazar defined a typology for studying the specific political cultures that dominated the states of the union. Though dated, Elazar’s work offers a clear understanding of why the bi-state region is what it is—and with a bit more analysis, points to a direction for change.¹

**ABOUT STATE POLITICAL CULTURE**

State political culture can be defined as the norms and behaviors of populations living in various jurisdictions, directly influencing the institutions of government, the rules by which those institutions operate, the selection of those serving in leadership roles, and the expectations and demands placed on
Elazar describes three specific dynamics: the set of perceptions of what politics is and what can be expected, the kinds of people who become active in various ways, and the actual way in which the “art of government” is practiced by all. Former United States Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase wrote that the term “state”—as used in the United States Constitution—referred not just to government, but rather to “the combined idea…of people, territory, and government.” The strength of Chase’s definition is that “states” are more than just jurisdiction, they are social, physical, and institutional—and so any discussion of state political culture should respect the multidimensional aspects of states themselves.

State political culture is but one of three larger forces in the United States observed by Elazar, and all of these come together to define the American political experience. In addition to political culture are the factors of “sectionalism,” or the ties that bond groups of states together (“the South,” “New England,” “the Midwest”) and “frontier,” or the constant desire to exercise control over the environment and to realign accordingly.

This is to remind us that political culture does not operate in a vacuum and there are other significant relationships to space and environment that are worth examining. However, in the case of the St. Louis region, the impact of state political culture is important in and of itself.

The mobility of population spreads political culture, both across states and within states. As people pursue the frontier dynamic, they bring with them attitudes, ideas, and expectations—often finding like groups with which to settle and develop. Many scholars argue that Elazar’s work is outdated in the 21st century, and an argument can be made for that. Certainly, populations have shifted considerably in the four decades since Elazar did his work. The demographic composition of the country has changed, as have immigration/migration patterns, fertility rates, economic conditions, and environmental conditions. Despite the incredible level of change that has occurred, the institutions that serve those populations have not. It is the premise of this essay that 1.) perpetuate a considerable amount political culture, 2.) determine the dynamics of political involvement by citizens and other institutions, and 3.) that, though the work of those institutions changes over time, the institutions themselves change only slowly and incrementally (and sometimes reluctantly).

Missouri and Illinois have distinct political cultures because the populations that settled the states migrated from different places. While both are blends of traditionalistic and...
individualistic culture, each emphasizes a different side that makes each state distinct. Illinois has, primarily, an individualistic political culture developed from population migration that drifted from the east—Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, to name a few. It has a similar, though not identical, culture with these states. Missouri, on the other hand, has a belt of traditionalistic political culture because it was influenced by southern populations moving northward, especially along a belt from Virginia, to Kentucky and Tennessee, through Southern Illinois, and into Missouri. Missouri, therefore, tends to have a political culture that is more compatible with southern states (and the southern portion of Illinois—which is a bit different from the northern portion of the state).

MISSOURI’S TRADITIONALISTIC POLITICAL CULTURE

There are three main manifestations of traditionalistic political culture that are especially applicable to the Missouri case: the presence and influence of social hierarchy, comfort with family rule, and politics built around interpersonal relationships that value the status quo. Traditionalistic political culture is “rooted in an ambivalent attitude toward the marketplace coupled with a paternalistic and elitist conception of the commonwealth.” It is an old, pre-commercial attitude “that accepts a substantially hierarchical society as part of the ordered nature of things, authorizing and expecting those at the top of the social structure to take a special and dominant role in government.”

Elazar notes that a traditionalistic political culture “accepts government as an actor with a positive role in the community, but it tries to limit that role to securing the continued maintenance of the existing social order.” The culture of power “functions to confine real political power to a relatively small and self-perpetuating group drawn from an established elite who often inherit their ‘right’ to govern through family ties or social position.”

Political competition in traditionalistic political culture is “usually conduction through factional alignments, an extension of the personal politics characteristic of the system; hence political systems within the culture tend to have loose one-party systems….” Good government maintains traditional patterns, and if necessary “their adjustment to changing conditions with the least possible upset. Bureaucracy in a traditionalistic political culture often interferes with the fine web of informal interpersonal relationships that lie at the root of the political system and have been developed by following traditional patters over the years.”

THE CASE FOR SOCIAL HIERARCHY

The elite of the St. Louis region have come together in a very powerful forum called Civic Progress. Its members over the last fifty years have included the wealthiest and most powerful members of St. Louis society. In more recent years, the organization’s table has diversified in many ways but it remains a circle of private-sector power. There is scant a great event or piece of infrastructure in St. Louis over the last fifty years that did not have the fingerprints of Civic Progress on it, and St. Louis’ prominent families have lent their talent and treasure to noteworthy civic projects regularly: Baer, Busch, Danforth, and Queeny for example beginning several decades ago, and names like Roberts, Schlafly, and Taylor for example from more recent decades. The leadership represented by these people, both public and private, both personal and institutional, have generated significant positive results for St. Louis and the region is fortunate to have them. It is not that they exist that speaks to Missouri’s traditionalistic culture—scholarship is plentiful identifying the roles of elites in implementing the community’s agenda—but it is the reliance of St. Louis on these talented
people to often *set* the agenda that makes the case for traditionalistic political culture.

On a negative side, the traditionalistic political culture has long had a close relationship with racism. St. Louis is repeatedly listed among the most racially-polarized cities in the country. While it is true that a considerable amount of this can be laid at the feet of flawed national policies such as home lending practices, urban renewal, and public housing, the region must bear a measure of this weight itself. According to *Where We Stand*, East-West Gateway Council of Governments shows that St. Louis ranks in the top ten most-disparate regions among 35 peer regions in multiple indicators. In the areas of infant mortality and unemployment, St. Louis ranked 4th highest; in college education and poverty, St. Louis ranked 9th highest. The statistics do not show an improvement since 2002. It is the steadiness of these statistics that is emblematic of the traditionalistic political culture. The “status quo” often carries the day. The social hierarchy that has been set in St. Louis specifically, and Missouri generally, is difficult to shift and break through. Southern Illinois also shares a legacy of racism from its own traditionalistic elements, evident in its unfortunate distinction of seeing three Progressive-Era race riots—Springfield in 1909, East St. Louis in 1917, and Chicago in 1919, with East St. Louis having the dubious distinction of being the bloodiest in the country’s history.

**THE CASE FOR FAMILY RULE**

Missouri and St. Louis clearly have a strong affinity for family rule. There are multiple examples of political activity running through families, both within a particular generation and across generations. These are not tied to a particular geographic part of the state, nor to a particular racial group, nor to a particular political party. Its universality provides evidence that it is part of the state’s political culture and it is prominent.

One of the most prominent political families in Missouri bears the name Carnahan. Mel Carnahan, a Democrat and native of the Rolla area, served as Missouri’s governor from 1993 to 2000. He ran for the US Senate in the year 2000, but died in a plane crash shortly before the November election—which he won posthumously. Lieutenant Governor Roger Wilson, assuming the office of governor after Carnahan’s death, appointed Jean Carnahan to serve her late husband’s term. The subsequent years have seen considerable success for the Carnahan family. Daughter Robin Carnahan was elected Missouri Secretary of State in 2004 and won re-election in 2008. Son Russ Carnahan won election to the United States House of Representatives representing the third congressional district, succeeding Richard Gephardt. Congressman Carnahan’s wife served as a municipal judge in St. Louis.

Another prominent political family name in Missouri is Blunt. Roy Blunt, a Republican and native of southern Missouri, served as Missouri’s Secretary of State from 1985 to 1993, and won election to the United States House of Representatives from the 7th congressional district of Missouri in 1996. His son, Matt, was also elected Missouri’s Secretary of State (at age 29), and then was elected Governor (at age 33). He served only one term. When Missouri’s senior Senator, Christopher Bond, announced his retirement in 2009, the first major candidates to replace him were from Missouri’s two most powerful political families—Roy Blunt and Robin Carnahan.

There are many other examples of family rule in the region. Longtime US Congressman from Missouri’s first district, William Clay, was succeeded in office by his son, William Lacy Clay. The Clays have long been a powerful force in St. Louis politics. Further south in Missouri, 8th district US Congressman Bill Emerson was replaced by his widow JoAnn Emerson in 1996. She has won re-election multiple times and has become a political force in her own right. St. Louis city
politics are full of prominent family names. Mayor Francis Slay is the son of longtime democratic power broker. Former Mayor Freeman Bosley is too. Former Aldermanic president Tom Villa is the son of longtime political powerbroker Red Villa, and his own son Matt Villa currently serves on the Board of Aldermen. Within the traditionalistic culture, voters find comfort in the interpersonal relationships established by political families and reward these relationships with election.

**THE CASE FOR STATUS-QUO POLITICS**

The status quo nature of Missouri’s traditionalistic-influenced culture is probably best illustrated by the state’s participation in the tax revolt begun after California’s famous Proposition 13 initiative of June 6, 1978. By 1982, Missouri was among 20 states of all political cultures in following California’s lead by altering government’s ability to collect taxes. The Hancock Amendment to the Missouri constitution in 1980 allowed voters to trump planned tax increases by state government by requiring all increases in state and local taxes to be put before voters as a referenda. According to scholars, traditionalistic voters have been reluctant to approve new taxes and many institutions struggle financially because their revenues are constrained. In the generation that has passed since the tax revolt era, other states have relaxed the restrictions, including California’s 1990 repeal of Proposition 13, but Missouri did not follow in the change. In fact, in 1994 there was an initiative on the ballot to strengthen the Hancock Amendment, though it was not successful. Colorado (moralistic political culture) and Washington (moralistic/individualistic political culture) both modified state tax and expenditure limitation law in 1992 and 1993, respectively. Traditionalistic Missouri voters had seized power from the state legislature and have not seen fit to return any portion of this power to the body.

Missouri continues to lag in government spending, and the St. Louis metropolitan area illustrates this point. According to East-West Gateway Council of Governments, the St. Louis region ranks second-highest among 35 peer regions in units of government per person, yet ranks third-lowest in per-capita government expenditures. Traditionalistic states are reluctant to change. Re-election rates are high, governing documents are old, and old institutions with repetitive leadership continue to replicate old results. This is not to say that Missouri is dysfunctional—to the contrary, the state functions rather well given its constraints—but the political culture of the state makes real change exceptionally difficult.
ILLINOIS’ INDIVIDUALISTIC POLITICAL CULTURE

The key manifestation of the individualistic political culture is the role of the exchange relationship found in the marketplace. Elazar states that “the individualistic political culture emphasizes the conception of the democratic order as a marketplace,” meaning that “…government is instituted for strictly utilitarian reasons.” Government in the individualistic political culture “emphasizes the centrality of private concerns” and “places a premium on limiting community intervention, whether governmental or nongovernmental, into private activities to the minimum necessary to keep the marketplace in proper working order.” This laissez-faire approach is nothing new to American politics—in fact, it has been a dominant force in domestic politics since the country’s inception. There is a twist to this, though, in individualistic states.

Certainly, most working in government in individualistic states view public service as an obligation to provide quality public service in exchange for salary, benefit, and status that is due them. Elazar recognizes this point explicitly. However, there are others in the individualistic culture who see the primary responsibility of working in government as serving oneself (and those who have supported her or him directly), providing these favors at public expense. Such behavior is often tolerated in the individualistic political culture because politics is viewed as a “system of mutual obligations rooted in personal relationships.” Elazar states that “politicians are interested in office as a means of controlling the distribution of the favors or rewards of government rather than as a means of exercising governmental power for programmatic ends.” One does not have to look for in Illinois politics to find examples of this.

The public’s view of this often falls short of outrage. “There is a strong tendency among the public to believe that politics is a dirty—if necessary—business, better left to those who are willing to soil themselves by engaging in it,” notes Elazar. “Since a fair amount of corruption is expected in the normal cause of things, there is relatively little popular excitement when any is found unless it is of an extraordinary character.” This explains why citizens will throw up their hands at some instances of corruption and walk away, rather than organize protest and force corrective action.

It is not just elected officials who are drawn into this attitude. Bureaucracy is too. “Bureaucratic organization is introduced within the framework of the favor system; large segments of the bureaucracy may be insulated from it through the merit system, but the entire organization is pulled into the political environment at crucial points through political appointment at the upper echelons and, very frequently, the bending of the merit system to meet political demands.” This could be seen as a rather scathing indictment of bureaucratic behavior in individualistic political culture, but certainly examples of bureaucratic compliance with corrupt leadership are readily found.

SETTING THE STAGE WITH GOVERNMENT POWER

Illinois has a lot of government. There are 868 units of government in the bi-state St. Louis MSA, serving a population of over 2.5 million. However, the five Illinois counties of the 2000 Census MSA account for about one-third of the region’s population, but account for approximately 50% of the units of government. Illinois, in softening its incorporation laws, has used the ability to create government to spread political control, expand opportunities for patronage employment, and tightly control service delivery dynamics—all consistent with Elazar’s individualistic political culture. These were long-standing tools of political machines and patronage politics. Some scholars
argue that this exists today in the form of special tax districts and tax increment financing districts, being local governments that have both political and economic goals.22

The large amount of government in Illinois stems from a significant constitutional change coming out of the Civil War era. In 1870, the State of Illinois adopted a constitution that shifted municipal incorporation power from state-level authority to county-level authority.23 This new laissez-faire approach to local governance allowed for massive government expansion and political profiteering. A wave of municipal incorporations occurred over the next twenty-five years, and many well-known cities in Metro East developed or amended charters under the new rules: East St. Louis in 1877, Madison in 1888, Glen Carbon in 1893, Granite City in 1896, Fairmont City in 1913, Wood River in 1917, and what is now Sauget in 1926. Leaders emerged in the state who were entrepreneurs in both the economic and policy sense of the word. Leaders in Illinois during this time were typical urban power brokers. The eminent scholar Daniel Boorstin called these leaders civic “boosters,” and characterized them by their ability to merge public and private prosperity.24 Merging public and private prosperity was not just the fact of how these leaders ran government, it was a public expectation.

MERGING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROSPERITY

A significant number of cities in Metro East were established by businesses to advance business interests—and this behavior was perfectly legal. In fact, it was encouraged and resulted in substantial industrial presence in southern Illinois. Consider the roles of Standard Oil in creating Wood River (1906), Shell Oil in creating Roxana (1917), the National Stock Yards in creating National City (1907), and the Aluminum Ore Company in creating Alorton (1944).25 Probably the most blatant example of merging public and private prosperity was the creation of the city of Monsanto, Illinois, in 1926. The Monsanto Chemical Company purchased 1.65 square miles of land along the Mississippi River, just south of East St. Louis. The company was explicit about its intention: it bought “acreage in excess of [the firm’s] requirements with the express intention of creating a community of chemical-using industries.”26 A company brochure bragged about the local government it had created. “Monsanto, incorporated as such on August 14, 1926, is a typical industrial center, comprising not only factories but a subdivision of small homes for the employees…. It is governed by a President and
six Trustees; men who are eager to make the district attractive to industries. Being self-governing, its tax rates are low and there are no burdensome ‘nuisance’ taxes.27

The “burdensome nuisance taxes” speaks directly to the City of St. Louis. In the days before national environmental standards and substantive local zoning ordinances, cities used the “nuisance” tax to use local police power to enter a property, abate whatever nuisance existed there, and send the landowner a bill for the enforcement. The 1914 St. Louis city charter allowed for nuisance abatement, and this was a significant threat to industry operating in the growing residential metropolis. A 2006 Wall Street Journal feature on the city (now called Sauget) titled “Yes, In My Back Yard,” noted that the city still pursues nuisance industries.28

This commercial motivation for incorporating cities fits cleanly with the individualistic political culture. If government could be a tool for improving commerce and personal wealth—while enriching public coffers along the way—a business leader could be deemed foolish to not pursue it.

THE STRUGGLE WITH CORRUPTION

Any power arrangement that could yield both private and public prosperity runs the risk of becoming corrupted to the point where private prosperity becomes the prevailing priority. This aspect of the individualistic political culture has made for sensational headlines over the years.

Stories of corruption have swirled around East St. Louis city hall from the city’s earliest days. In 1884, a judge ordered City Treasurer Thomas J. Canty to surrender all city funds in his possession. On the morning that the transfer was to have taken place, the new city hall vault had been seemingly been robbed by opening a hole in the brick wall that enclosed the safe. It appeared that tens of thousands of dollars had been stolen, when likely it had never arrived there in the first place.29 A congressional investigation revealed in 1918 that G. Locke Tarlton, as president of the East Side Levee District, engaged in extensive graft. When the Levee District decided to purchase a parcel of land, Tarlton sent a representative to the widow who owned the land and he purchased it for $5,000. Three weeks later, Tarlton sold the land to the Levee District for $20,000.30 During the Kefauver Committee on Organized Crime investigation in 1951, Police Commissioner John T. English was asked to explain his income tax statement: “Now, when we did have access to your income-tax returns, we noted that…in 1943 your income from the city of East St. Louis was $4,000; rents, $2,508; miscellaneous $209.55, a rather modest income; and then there is an additional
item of income, political contributions, $24,000. Do you care to explain?" The stories continue to the present day.

Federal agents have descended on East St. Louis city hall repeatedly to investigate corruption charges. Most notable was the 2004 raid that led to the conviction of five city officials and workers, including the return to prison of former Regulatory Affairs Director Kelvin Ellis for obstruction of justice charges, and the sentencing of Democratic party boss and City Councilman Charles Powell for election fraud. Federal agents returned to city hall in 2009 to investigate liquor license fees and the management of taverns in the city—which were found to be a source of corruption in the 1918 congressional investigation as well. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

The impeachment of Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich in 2009 showed that the struggle with corruption reaches beyond the local level to the state and even national level. Blagojevich was impeached by the Illinois legislature on the grounds that he abused his power as an elected official. Federal investigators recorded Blagojevich discussing a payoff for the US Senate seat vacated by then-president-elect Barack Obama. He was removed from office and faces federal charges. He was not the first Illinois governor to face indictment and prosecution. Former Illinois Governor George Ryan was sent to federal prison in 2006 for racketeering and fraud charges stemming from his tenure as Secretary of State. Former Illinois Governor Dan Walker, governor from 1973-1977, was sentenced to federal prison for accepting fraudulent loans after he left office. Former Illinois Governor Otto Kerner—a governor who rose to national prominence and a position on the US Court of Appeals—was sentenced to federal prison in 1973 for bribery, among other charges. Daniel Rostenkowski, as a powerful US Congressman from the Chicago area, pleaded guilty to mail fraud in 1996 and served time in federal prison until his pardon by President Bill Clinton in 2000.

Lest Missourians think that the Show-Me State is above corrupt behavior, recall that Elazar identified an individualistic element in Missouri—just not a dominant element. The weak mayor system in St. Louis was put in place by the 1914 city charter as a response to corruption. This change was made, in part, as a response to the infamous corruption of the administration of Mayor Henry Ziegenhein. Lincoln Steffens, a Progressive muckraking journalist, exposed the country to urban corruption in his book Shame of the Cities. St. Louis’s corruption was so vast and intriguing that it warranted two chapters, rather than the one chapter dedicated to larger cities like Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York. The result of the Progressive-era charter change was to strip the mayor of financial power—and creating a divided power system where fiscal management is vested with a comptroller and budget decisions with a Board of Estimate and Apportionment on which the mayor has but one of the three votes.

It is not a surprise that some politicians are corrupt. A compilation of ethics studies done for The Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science indicated that about 10% of employees “take advantage of situations if the penalty is less than the benefit” and the likelihood of being caught is low. There is a segment of the human population that is willing to engage in illicit behavior, and these people show up in offices, schools, churches, bureaucracy, and elected office. While illegal or unethical behavior is not to be excused without due process, it should also not be surprising or unanticipated. Corrupt individuals do not make a corrupt system, but institutions can be permissive and leaders owe it to the public to make sure government institutions protect and serve the public interest.
MOVING FORWARD: DIFFERENCE AS STRENGTH

The 21st century is truly the information age. Information is power. Knowledge is power. Communication is essential. Political boundaries and geographic location seemingly mean less and less as technology advances. Missouri and Illinois show distinct political cultures—not unique cultures, since both elements are shared by both states, but distinct because each presents a different element as dominant. Though Elazar’s study is over forty years old, it is still relevant to understanding how states work.

All political cultures and all political institutions carry with them political “baggage.” This baggage does not have to be a detriment. The analysis that Elazar provides today’s decision-makers is quite valuable. It functionally lays out a policy map, showing where pitfalls may exist and how to navigate through cumbersome systems. It points in a direction and identifies the loci of power. Conversely, it could be used as another excuse for why a project should not be carried out, another reason why bi-state cooperation is impossible, or as evidence that one side or the other is not to be trusted. However, it would be to the region’s advantage to fully understand the rather unique situation facing St. Louis. There are not many urban regions of St. Louis’s size straddling these two particular political cultures. The region has shown a high degree of institutional stability, and decision-making here is a known commodity. Leaders have proven that bi-state cooperation is possible, and that the residents of the region will support key projects and initiatives.

There are successes. Every bridge over the Mississippi River represents meaningful cooperation in one way or another. Consider the reconstruction of the Eads Bridge and the McKinley Bridge—both cooperative efforts approached from innovative perspectives. Consider the interstate bridges—Chain of Rocks, Poplar Street, and Jefferson Barracks—the financial and maintenance agreements involved with them, and the negotiation for a new span in the coming decade. Consider the engineering marvel that is the Clark Bridge. Consider the old Chain of Rocks Bridge, too. Here, a piece of infrastructure designed for cars is now dedicated to people and the enjoyment of the historic river.

Consider Metrolink, which has served both sides of the river from day one. Consider the East-West Gateway Council of Governments, an entity that brings elected officials from both states and political cultures to one table. Consider the Regional Chamber and Growth Association, a commercial organization that realizes the regional economy affects Missouri and Illinois alike, and brings private-sector leaders together for the benefit of the regional economy. Consider FOCUS St. Louis, a source of regional citizenship, regional leadership development, and regional policy perspective.

The reality is that the St. Louis region comes together across the state line every single day. Cooperation is possible. It will not always be easy, it will not always be painless, but it can happen. In fact, the tools are in place to make it work and keep it working. The region should continue to use the many connections between the states, and build more. Knowledge and respect for the states’ distinct histories and cultures is important, and difference is not a detriment. Rather, diversity is the region's strength. From this perspective, the Mississippi River is indeed the middle of the region, not the edge.
Endnotes

1. Portions of this research stemmed from a grant funded by the SIUE Institute for Urban Research and performed in collaboration with Dr. Nicholas Guehlstorf. While this essay goes substantially beyond that initial work, I gratefully acknowledge SIUE’s financial support, and Dr. Guehlstorf’s collaboration and input.

2. Elazar 90.
3. Texas v. White (1869) cited in Elazar, 4-5.
5. Elazar 99.
9. Three excellent books on the East St. Louis race riot have been published in recent years: see Malcolm McLaughlin’s Racial Killing in East St. Louis (2005), Harper Barnes’s Never Been a Time (2008), and Charles Lumpkins’s American Pogrom (2008).
11. See, for example, Harrigan and Nice 9-12, 65-68.
13. Elazar 94.
14. Elazar 94.
15. Elazar 94-95.
16. Elazar 95.
17. Elazar 95.
18. Elazar 95.
23. Theising 67.
25. For an explanation of industrial suburbs and these examples, see Theising, Chapter 3.
27. Monsanto Chemical Works 20.
29. Furlong 166.
30. US House of Representatives 8830.
31. Kefauver 607.
34. “Illinois has long legacy of public corruption.”
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ENTER LIKE A LOVER: THOUGHTS ON RACE, CLASS, UNIVERSITIES, AND COMMUNITIES
Bob Hansman

WHO’S NOT HERE? (TAKE ONE: INTRODUCTION)

The first day of class (“class” being Community Building, Building Community—a mostly-freshman, mostly-architecture elective at Washington University, and now the foundation course for the undergraduate Urban Studies minor), I ask the students a very simple question: “Who’s not here?”

As I write this article, in November 2008, we are just coming off of the presidential election. The day after the election, when I tried to talk about it at the start of class, I broke down in front of my students. I told them I would be happy to talk with them some other time about my reactions, mentioned somewhat cautiously that there was probably no way that the election could mean the same thing to the students that it meant to me, and thanked them. I came to accept that there might be a deep paradox at work here…that those of us to whom this (“this”?) has meant so much for so long…were unable to make it happen when it still meant so much, in so many different ways, to so many different people. Perhaps we had to wait for a generation to come along to whom, in a way, it did not mean so much, in order for it to happen.

This year the students were to write their answers in their course journals, and the answers were mostly the ones I am used to getting from students. “My friends are not here.” “My family is not here.” Highly personal lenses. Now and then, perhaps because of brief asides that had floated through the discussion in class that first day, some students wrote some things about poor people probably not being here, but they couldn’t really tell. Few of them, even later, when I brought up the question again in class, were able to look around the room and see what I thought was so obvious. Whatever they were seeing, they seemed used to seeing it. Or perhaps they saw it but wouldn’t say it. Even with the course description saying that the course would, to a great extent, revolve around two rather famous quotes (one by Winston Churchill, one by W.E.B. DuBois), they didn’t see or say who wasn’t there in the room. Little by little, a few students began to tiptoe around it….”Poor people…?” “Minorities…?” Well,
which minorities?

WITH TIME

Not long after I began teaching at Washington University, I also began teaching in the housing projects south of downtown, specifically in Clinton-Peabody, with kids also coming from Darst-Webbe and later LaSalle Park Village. In retrospect, it is interesting to see how the things I learned in “the projects” affected my ideas about teaching at the University.

I had agreed, without really being aware of what I was agreeing to, to teach a summer art program to teenagers in the projects. The crack epidemic was in full swing. Bloods were all over the eastern majority of the projects; Crips held down the western edge. There was a murder on one of my students’ front stoop the first week I was there. It was to be merely the first of an astonishing number of young murders and deaths that I would encounter down there.

At first I saw mostly what was bad about the projects. After each day of trying to get through to the few kids who showed up, I would drive back to my suburban home with the car windows rolled up, even in the summer heat, so no one could hear me screaming at having to leave “my kids” in that hell-hole.

With time, I began going down to spend time with the kids even when I wasn’t contracted to. Later that summer, I was startled to realize, as I was driving down to the projects one time, that I had just had the unexpected sensation deep down inside that I was coming home.

I began seeing mostly what was good about the projects.

With time, things balanced out: I realized it wasn’t all good or all bad, but the simultaneous existence of both extremes, plus a lot of grey in the middle. The kids were not their environment; the kids were not the litter and debris in the lots around them. Together, the kids and I looked for beauty in their neighborhood, and they created some of their own without ever pretending the ugly was not there, too.

With time, I moved my own studio into the projects and adopted one of the boys. Some of the kids told me later that I was one of the only people who came down there that they couldn’t scare off; they’d tried, but I was either too stubborn or too stupid to be scared off.
ORIGINS OF THE COURSE

I have an innate suspicion of programs that set out to be programs, even though I have been a part of some—even some that have succeeded. But they didn’t necessarily succeed by sticking to my plans; in fact, they more often succeeded when I lost control of them. Too often, programs seek to justify or sustain themselves, rather than satisfy a real need, the satisfaction of which might cause the program’s own obsolescence. They become programs looking for a need, rather than the result of a need looking for a program—thus tempting dependence, rather than independence. They also often go into areas where their success rates might be good, where they’ll look good on paper—but where the need is not so great. If you go where the need is greatest, your own failure rate might be correspondingly high. Going where your failure rate might be high is a decision not everyone seems eager to make.

In the early years of the program in the projects, which came to be called City Faces, I had opportunities and offers to move elsewhere. If you move into and out of an area quickly, as many programs do, you can create the impression of quick success. You can even fool yourself. But if you stick around, you soon see what you are really up against, and in some ways, the longer you stay, the greater are your failures—as well as, hopefully, your successes. That, too, is a reality and a messiness which many programs would just as soon avoid.

I’m still in the projects, fifteen years later (by the time this article comes out). On one level, I did not want the kids to have to live through yet one more abandonment; they’d been abandoned and ignored enough times in their lives already. Countless people have come…and gone…down there. But on another level, I simply came to love the kids—and to leave would have been a loss to me as much as to them. Early on, when I really didn’t know what I was talking about, I claimed that the program might end but the relationships would not; it turned out I was right in spite of myself. The program as such morphed over and over, becoming whatever the kids needed it to be—succeeding, as it turns out, by becoming a bit unfocussed, a bit vague, and therefore flexible. Ultimately, it just became a part of our lives together—which is very different from dependence, at least on the kids’ part.

With time, some of my Washington University students formed meaningful friendships with the kids in the projects, as well. They went down to the projects on their own time, played with the kids, talked with them, just did things together. We also began bringing the kids out to the University, first as part of the art program, later in other ways.

At some point, people from the University came to me and said, essentially, “We’ve gotten wind of what your students are doing with the kids in the projects, we think it’s valuable, and is there any way that you could turn that experience into a course for our students?”

“I’d love to,” I said. And then I thought, “But…how?”

GETTING IT WRONG

I was briefly and marginally involved with a local organization that installed playgrounds around the city. Normally, the group had the time and money to do their groundwork—getting to know people in the neighborhood, checking for and enlisting support for the playground, and finally involving people from the community in the actual installation of the playground, which became a two-day community event. Part way through the planning for one particular playground, the group’s financial backing was cut back significantly. Some people, as I recall, felt the advance community groundwork wasted time and money. The group had no choice but to simply show up, put in the
playground, and leave. Of all the playgrounds that the group put in, that was the only playground that got torched. Is it sheer coincidence that the only project that did not lay its groundwork in the community was the only one that got torched? Is it possible that we—as well as the kids who actually burned the playground—bore some responsibility?

A few years ago, I was on a mid-review of some student architecture projects. One of the students had chosen Kinloch for her project site. Formerly an important African-American community, Kinloch is now nearly a ghost town, most of the homes having even been leveled. The student was projecting images of maps, aerial views, other research and documentation. I started to talk to the student about some of the plans and places that I was aware of in the area, and I walked up to the screen to point out a few things. The professor in charge broke in and said something to the effect that this was one of the oddest places she’d ever seen: “They’ve put in all the infrastructure, the sidewalks and steps, but they haven’t put in any houses yet.”

One of my colleagues told me of an incident that happened with her own students. They had been making proposals for a rather tough area of town, and one of the proposals involved fixing up a vacant lot. The students had seen children playing in the lot and felt that, if the lot were fixed up, the children could play there more safely and happily. But they didn’t ask the children. The children could have told them—as they eventually did—that they did not want the lot fixed up, because then the older kids would take it over and they would lose their place to play.

One time, during a final review here at the University, I invited one of the City Faces kids—DeMario, who was about 10 or 11 years old at the time—to sit in with me while the students presented their designs to a group of faculty. At one point, a student was presenting a project that a number of the faculty seemed well-disposed to but I wasn’t so sure about. I knew the student who was presenting, knew he was a good sport and could take what was likely about to happen, so I turned to DeMario and said, “What do you think of this project, DeMario?” He got up and looked at it like he’d seen the grown-ups do, and then he pointed to parts of it and said, “I wouldn’t be caught dead in this project.” Some people laughed. Then he thought for a minute and corrected himself: “Actually, I probably would be caught dead in this project,” he said, and he proceeded to explain why. The student, as I recall, loved it; the professor, as I recall, didn’t. It became known as “The DeMario Test.”

Several years ago, some of my own students (in what would eventually become the Community Building course) were proposing a pocket park in a North side neighborhood. Some of the residents listened patiently and then explained to the students that, given the neighborhood, the last thing they needed or wanted was a pocket park: “People need things to do here, not places to do nothing, and besides, don’t you understand what kind of activities that park will attract?”

But back in the beginning, I was still trying to come up with a course. It was gradually becoming clear to me what I wanted to steer away from, but what was I steering toward?

SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL

You can learn a lot from children’s books. I read one to my college students: it’s a story by Sharon Dennis Wyeth, called *Something Beautiful*, with illustrations by Chris Soentpiet. If this article does nothing else, I hope it might cause people to go out and find and buy this beautiful book. Before I read the book to my students, I ask them to remember back to when they were children, what childhood was like for them, even what their own children’s books were like. Then I read them *Something Beautiful*. No description can do justice to this story, but, in a nutshell, it is about a little girl who, surrounded by trash and danger and destitution, goes looking for beauty—“Where is my something beautiful?”—and finds it. And creates
I, too, had spent that time early on with the children in the projects looking for beauty in places where other people—and often the children themselves—saw only trash. I discovered there’s a thin line between seeing the potential in something apparently without beauty, and building too much on or identifying too much with the casual detritus that we find around us—or around other people. Go too far in either direction—not seeing enough beauty, or seeing too much beauty (or mistaken significance) where it really isn’t—and you have a problem.

One enduring method of education involves sending students into a neighborhood to gather information—or, in the case of architecture education, artifacts—on which to base subsequent classroom work. Such artifacts are generally of the students’ own selection (thus telling something about the students’ biases); one never knows whether the artifacts come from within the neighborhood or were blown or brought in by someone else (like us?); and the artifacts the students bring back are, sort of by necessity, trash. I am sure that the people teaching this way mean well. I am sure that none of them thinks a piece of shoe or a broken bottle can signify a person, much less a neighborhood. But the potential problems and unfortunate associations here are as inescapable as they are unnecessary; there are always other ways to do things. Educational methods embody implicit value judgments: about which things have what kind of meaning (and to whom) and how and why you might go about extracting and building upon that meaning. And what is not spoken of also speaks loudly.

“Tabula rasa.” It goes even further. It assumes something like a blank slate—as if there is so little of value in a thing—or a place—that professors, professionals, and students can pretty much have free rein. If you adopt tabula rasa as a premise, you can turn a whole city into a gesture drawing without batting an eye.

Seeing nothing to build on…the wrong thing to build on…. There are some things that academics seem to be able to turn a blind eye to better than community residents can. Is it any wonder, then, that some residents see students in their neighborhood as “a godsend,” while others bolt the door? That the communities’ reactions range from “Please do something in our neighborhood,” to “…but please, do not do that.” People who have little reason to be so can often be the most patient and forgiving, but……as one of the City Aldermen told me recently, “Black folks are sick and tired of being ignored, of being used, of being studied to death—and never even seeing or benefiting from the results of the studies. Year after year we open our doors to the
students, we give what we are able to give to the schools, the schools can claim they do community outreach, but what do we ever get in return?"

**BUSINESS AS USUAL**

As I was working on a previous section of this article, a colleague of mine walked into my office, saw the heading GETTING IT WRONG, and said, “That’s the easy part.” There is some likelihood that, in this instance at least, the easier it is, the “wronger” it is. A student—a good and conscientious student—recently described what we are doing in the Community Building course now as “more than we need to.” He was right, in a sense, as a statement about business-as-usual; if the bar is low enough, we are definitely way above it; and yet I cannot help feeling that we, ourselves, are still way below where anyone needs to be.

Academia has its reasons, of course, for doing what it does, and the way it does it.

Simple logistics are surely one reason. Academic reality is in some ways in logistical conflict with non-academic reality. If we try to do things thoroughly, they’ll probably take longer than a semester, we probably won’t have everything we want for a final presentation and what passes for closure, and we might not have produced anything ready to be turned into portfolio pages. On the other hand, if we don’t have the time or inclination to do things right, we might also get a burned playground.

The academic reaction to this problem has generally been that complexity gets reduced (and with it, reality), fewer questions get considered (making for less informed answers), and/or community engagement becomes very carefully delimited (and arguably not as beneficial for anyone).

Priorities could be another reason—priorities and the differing basic premises of academy and community. A local community worker recently summarized this schism rather bluntly when he said, in essence: “The community doesn’t need more studies, we need more jobs; only the universities think we need more studies.” An implicit question here—and it’s not necessarily a simple one—is, of course: Who benefits from more studies.

Fear of failure could be another reason why academia does what it does. Go to any conference and you will hear similar stories: even though some individuals at various schools engage in messy real-world complexity, the schools themselves often look at the messiness of reality and see the potential for failure, and an unacceptable risk of accountability, to be strenuously avoided (or at least somehow sanitized). But one could, I think, argue rather persuasively that the best and most meaningful work must, almost by definition, risk failure; that to stay safely this side of the risk of failure is likely to result in something less engaged or necessary; that the risk of failure is simply the same risk that you must take in order to risk great success.

And, as some people in both academia and, especially, the community invariably point out, inaction has its own accountability. If we can be held accountable for planning a playground poorly, we can also be held accountable for failing to build a playground at all. To fail to act is to act.

All of this can create a cycle of mistrust. There are areas of this city where one university is unwelcome now because of something another university did there in the past. Unfortunately, in some cases, the universities, too, respond to this mistrust by retreating still further, and the cycle of mistrust feeds itself. However, many communities are begging for better (not less) involvement from the schools, and students in the schools are increasingly begging for community involvement, as well.

The community is generally aware of this problem. The Alderman I mentioned was surely (and painfully) aware of the incompleteness and inadequacy of business-as-usual education. But
how do schools and professors—as well as students—discover its inadequacy and incompleteness? And what can they do about it?

**THE CURRICULUM**

Right from the start, I could see that one of the major problems of any course might be me. I know some things, don’t know everything else; I have certain lenses that I do my best to minimize, but they are unavoidably there. More so than in my other courses, I saw myself as a possible impediment that needed, at least, to be acknowledged. I always ask the students to try to think about what I might not be showing them, what might be happening between the dots that I show them. But I also knew I could show students things other people could not or would not.

I knew that the course would be about the intersection of the built fabric and the social fabric, since that was something one could not escape thinking about in the projects. I wanted to do this, not through classroom theory alone, but through neighborhood visits where cultural forces had become imbedded in the built environment: we would use our present neighborhoods as places to “peel back” the skin to expose history and theory. Zoom in, zoom out: the relationship between big ideas and little people; the idea that history plays itself out in real people’s back yards and at their kitchen tables.

I knew that the course would have to involve multiple disciplines, partly because that was the nature of the subject matter (you don’t have to go out of your way to inject multi-disciplinary complexity into architecture, it is there whether we choose to recognize it or not; you have to go out of your way to take it out, to pretend it is not there), partly because there was no one “center,” and partly because the University program under which I was developing the course was one that brought professors from various disciplines together to look at topics from different angles, even to fight it out in front of the students if it came to that. One of the ideas behind it all was that we have just about reached the constructive limits of specialization, that disciplines unavoidably impact each other, and that unless the disciplines start finding ways to talk to each other, we are going to see increasingly incomplete and even conflicting educations ripping our world apart.

I knew that the course might evolve into a kind of Rorschach experience. The aforementioned teaching philosophy meshed well with what was taking shape in my own thinking: a course in which various disciplines (architecture, literature, race relations, psychology…) would be deliberately set next to each other, and students might even differ about what the course was “about.” Subsequent courses could untie the bundle and look at each thread with more singular focus, but this course would bundle them together to suggest, in an introductory way, the relationships among things.

Major questions arose—for me, as well as for the students: How do you know what you don’t know? How do you find out what you don’t know? And, in a slightly different vein, how do you learn what you need to learn?

It wasn’t as if nothing like this had been done, of course. There were models all over the place. But a lot of them seemed to place more emphasis on academics controlling and domesticating raw experience than what I had in the back of my mind, due to my own experiences and also to the kinds of experiences that my University students had found so valuable in their interactions with the City Faces kids. I didn’t mean to, but with every decision I seemed to find myself going against some orthodoxy—blurring professional/personal boundaries, blurring disciplines, moving out of my “official” area of expertise (i.e., what my last degree was in, ages ago, before life became a better teacher), generally moving into uncertain territory.
So I decided—or, rather, realized—that, rather than being a funnel, I would become a catalyst: I would set up opportunities for experience and interaction, but I would stay out of the actual interaction as much as possible. I wanted the students to hear from other people. The easiest first move would be to invite other people from academia, as well as experts from the public realm—including people who would disagree with each other—and even with me. And we would do that.

But that wasn’t good enough. It wouldn’t be enough to bring people in; the students had to go out. Everything I had experienced seemed to be telling me that the best learning and teaching, the best chances for shared transformation, came from just being there. But how do you build a curriculum around that? I decided it would take a couple different forms initially, one of which would be neighborhood tours, and lots of them—everywhere from East St. Louis to St. Charles.

Plus, in small groups, the students would spend a night in the projects, in the City Faces studio, interacting with the kids and whoever else came by. For the students, the best way of getting around the problem of me would be just being there themselves.

**JUST BEING THERE**

You have to start somewhere. We start at Ivory Perry Park. Weather permitting (and even not permitting—even rain can be a very different thing for different people: another learning experience), we walk there. We meet people. “Talk to people,” I tell the students, who are often talking to each other or sticking close to me, waiting for me to start up a “sanctioned” conversation with someone.

At the park, the students learn about Rodney McAllister, and then I ask them another of those questions: *Where were we when this happened?*

The students also hear about a group of neighborhood residents who, armed with nothing more than lawn chairs, have begun taking back the park. They hear about people—black and white—who are moving into some of the most troubled neighborhoods. Steve St. Pierre is one of them:

> “The problems that I had previously just read about are now my problems, and that makes a significant difference to my level of concern for these issues. Your problems are now my problems, and facing problems together tends to unite people. Choosing to locate my family here went against all instincts of self protection, and people think we are crazy, but it has gone a long way in the transformation of my own thinking, as well as my neighbors.”

The power of just being there: no agenda, no nothing—just being there, ready for transformation, which would happen from within, once they were a part of “within.” “There” would figure out what to do with them, just as the kids in the projects had figured out what to do with me.

But, of course, just being there requires crossing some pretty firmly entrenched borders.

**BORDER CROSSING**

The one experience that we all seem to share is the lack of shared experience. Mikey made that observation in class one day.

In City Faces, it quickly became clear to me that, as I told the kids, “We often hear about you, but we rarely hear from you.” But I had to have some personal experience to really feel the truth behind that, and now that simple observation was rapidly becoming the real heart of this new course:
crossing the borders of race and class that seemingly separated the Washington University students and the people in the communities we were visiting.

“Respect” is a word that gets tossed around in lots of contexts, some more respectful than others, but it has become a major issue for us, lest we fall into the treacherous waters of poverty as spectacle, or romanticizing other people’s poverty. So much has been done so wrong.

I ask the students to open all their senses on the tours—to sounds and textures and smells, not just sight. The students also notice who they see and where. Because we walk the majority of the time but take busses sometimes, the students start to notice who gets on and off the buses where, and going which directions; they notice how people react when they (the students) get on certain busses or get off certain places; and they notice the differences in what they experience riding and walking. Kyle reflected on this idea his journal: “When you’re in a bus you’re indifferent to what you see beyond the glass. You still see it, sure, but there’s a level of detachment to it as if nothing happening out there could ever change the way things are in here. Seeing something beyond the glass doesn’t affect you, so it may as well not even be happening. This class took me out of the bus. It made me get off the bus.”

Once off the bus, as I mentioned, the students at first tend to cluster around me and speak to no one but each other. But through experience the students soon come to realize how much can be learned in chance encounters with people—much of which supports what the books and experts say, some of which conflicts with it, too. The guest speakers had brought something important to the class, but the people on the street were adding something equally valuable. One little boy, Keenan, who lives in the projects and attends City Faces, tagged along with us on one of our tours and basically told the students everything they had been learning about the city, planning, race relations, the economy, transportation, and social justice—all from his little nine-year-old experience.

By just being there, the students quickly begin to feel the borders, the do-not-cross messages, without being told. At the site of Cochran Gardens, the students can feel how few people like themselves have ever stood on that ground. They can feel bad decisions, bad design. They can feel white flight; they can feel the Team Four Plan. And they can feel the difference between just being there and belonging there—even if they don’t fully know what it all means yet.

They think about border crossing and fuzzy edges, about where they spend their money, about which borders are porous enough that “outsiders” enter and support the communities. They can see—and feel—who, besides themselves, patronizes Billy Burk’s in the Ville, Amighetti’s on the Hill, Andre’s That’s-a-Burger and Mom’s Soul Food Kitchen in the Wellston Loop.

The students soon notice that the only really negative reactions we get from people in the communities are the most distant ones: people zooming by in the armor of their cars can shout anything they want at us, but the encounters that are face-to-face, on the sidewalk, always take a different, and better, form. The students soon realize that the distance that allows other people to mischaracterize them is the same distance that allows them (the students) to mischaracterize other people.

And some of the reactions have been memorable:

—kids in the neighborhood around Ivory Perry Park shouting, “I see white people!”
—children getting off a school bus in the Ville and shouting, “White folks in the hood!” (I thought about naming the class that, for a minute…)
—Jules, in the Ville, shouting from his bicycle, “Grab your wallets! Here come the white folks!”
—a minister in Kinloch who threw the kids for a loop with his marvelous inversion: “Welcome to Kinloch. Just make sure you get of here before the sun goes down.”

These were as funny—and as serious—as hell, but they were also the first time that some of the University students had ever seen anyone seeing them like that. The fact that some neighborhood people actually thought that some young white kids would have the intention—and, perhaps more tellingly, the where-withal—to buy their neighborhood out from under them was a very instructive moment in many ways.

Carolina wrote about the Kinloch interaction in one of her journal entries: “I found it ironic when the pastor we ran into said, ‘Welcome to Kinloch. Just make sure you get of here before the sun goes down.’ I immediately thought back on sundown towns, and pondered whether the pastor was saying so more as a threat or as a warning, or even as a joke. In any case, the tables have turned….”

Such interactions also give us a way to tackle early assumptions among the students about race- and class-blindness, political correctness, and those strategic and awkward gaps and silences. Protestations of colorblindness and class-blindness—until now in an environment where they see mostly people like themselves—finally begin to show some strain. Questions arise: Even if they can not admit to seeing the problem, can they now admit to feeling the problem, especially when the tables are turned? Could it be that, having been brought up to be class-blind and race-blind, now they cannot even see certain things? Could the same colorblindness that might have played some role in Obama’s election also blind the students to other real differences, injustices, inequities—and their role in maintaining them? Could their much-prized colorblindness and class-blindness actually be a luxury that other people still cannot afford?

The students begin to be aware of the lenses through which they see things. Assumptions of normativeness—of their own normativeness—of their own lives as the standard from which other people deviate, begin to get a little shaky.

The students also begin to notice that our bus drivers, some of whom nearly give the tours with me now, often have intimate personal histories with the neighborhoods we visit: “I went to school with…,” “My wife grew up here…,” “I used to work there…”—and the students gradually begin to understand what this might mean relative to the larger themes they are learning about.
They also notice some differences in reactions to us from people who obviously live in the neighborhoods compared to people who are only passing through. One van driver, a white guy who was apparently in the Wellston Loop to install security systems, stopped us twice, dramatically doing U-turns both times, to all but order us out of the neighborhood “before it gets dark.” He was livid that we—white folks, white students, white girl students—were even there. Some of the “in-between” people, like police, have had similarly dramatic reactions to our border crossings. I was nearly arrested in front of my students for supposedly bringing my class on a drug-buying mission to McRee Town, and some police in the Wellston Loop area gave several of my students some extremely unsavory advice about what they could do if they wanted to learn some things about the neighborhood.

But cross the borders we did—and continue to do so. For that, we might be tempted to congratulate ourselves; but, as Donesh challenged his fellow students in class one day: “We pat ourselves on the back for crossing borders and speaking to people, but where is their pat on the back for speaking to us, for crossing our borders?”

In his journal, Chris asked some related questions about people (including us) as they cross borders: “So, this posed for me the question—Why are the people in Wellston so friendly? Do the people in Wellston feel that they need to be friendly to us? How did the people in Wellston see us? Were we intruders? Visitors? Volunteers? Servants? Students? Friends? I feel that the last is how we were perceived. But what if someone from Wellston came and was walking around the Wash U campus, what would we think?”

And as we go from community to community, larger questions surface, as well: Does it matter that historically black communities are disappearing? Does it matter that the kids we saw playing in the playground in Kinloch will never meet the kids we saw playing in the playground in New Town?

One of the best questions came from three little girls in the Ville. On a tour a few years ago, our students had just gotten off their charter bus when a school bus let some kids off in the Ville. Three little girls came over to us, asked a few questions, admired the Washington University girls’ clothes, and then asked us, point blank: “Why don’t you come live here?”

GET REAL, PART ONE

How do you “end” a course that opens up the chance for that kind of question?

In the early years, we ended the semester with a large, almost Sim City model of a supposedly ideal city (which, interestingly, often wound up looking like St. Louis). Reviewers came to the on-campus review from a wide array of disciplines: three former City mayors, heads of every conceivable agency; people from architecture and planning, handicapped accessibility, affordable housing, public transportation, the arts; civil rights activists, and on and on. It was quite the event, but, by its very nature, it was a highly theoretical ending to a course that had dealt with a lot of reality along the way.

As it turned out, a “real” project dropped into our lap early on, and the students found themselves in a follow-up course shuttling back and forth to Bourbon, Missouri, that first year, and Cuba, Missouri, the second year, to put their thinking to use in the service of some modest planning ideas in those communities. The third year we stayed closer to home, in Pagedale, which was a very different kind of challenge. On the day of the final review, in the Pagedale City Hall, the students set up their models and computers and drawings, rehearsed their presentations one more time…and nobody came. It was the kind of “failure” that was, in many ways, at least as important as our perhaps-too-easy “successes” of the years before.
Undaunted, the fourth year we looked for another community in the St. Louis area. As a kid during the 1960’s, I would hear songs on the radio—KATZ in St. Louis, WESL on the East Side—and fly up to Joe’s Music at Hamilton and Easton (…as well as to Gabriel’s, and Buster’s…) to buy my little 45’s, and I gradually came to love and spend more time in the Wellston Loop area. In 1972, Easton Avenue was renamed, after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And we all watched, heartbroken, as it fell apart.

When I met with the former city planner (who was also a frequent guest in my class) to talk about other projects, we each, for our own reasons, were drawn to the Wellston Loop area. For him, it was a historic neighborhood that he valued; for me, it had been my youthfu Mecca, it was already on our tours, and I wanted to do anything I could in the neighborhood I’d fallen in love with. And, as fate would have it, it is one of Washington University’s closest neighbors.


In his book, *Strength to Love*, Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote, “Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.” That sounded a bit like us, so Martin Luther King, Jr., became our spiritual guide for the course—as well as our final destination and site.4

He also wrote and spoke about creating what he called “the beloved community,” and, in his final address, at Bishop J. Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee, he called on us to “develop a kind of dangerous unselfishness.” One has to wonder, of course, which half of “dangerous unselfishness” people resist more in practice. But anyone looking for an educational guiding star, a kind of drinking gourd for academia, could do a lot worse than this.5

But how do you manifest it? How do we start to have the shared experience that we haven’t had? How do we begin to live a common life that has the potential to transform student, teacher, resident—and make those terms interchangeable? How do we go from “just being there” to “just being here?”

And how might all this relate to our little class entering (and participating in) Martin Luther King’s (beloved) community? What part could we play?
ENTER LIKE A LOVER (OR AT LEAST A LOVE-ER)

An archeologist enters a city on foot, a sociologist enters a city by bus, an architect enters a city by plane. That’s a paraphrase of a paraphrase that a colleague of mine passed on to me a while back. Students are sometimes surprised to learn that the neighborhoods that I have been taking them to are not the ones that I feel some abstract concern for, but the ones that I love the most. If I could spend even more of my life in the Wellston Loop area, I would. I have thought about retiring in East St. Louis.

By this point in the course, the students have remarked on the number of people they see out in the neighborhoods, especially compared to where many of them grew up, and how many people seem to know each other, how many people are friendly to the students, how many people have lived there a long time and still seem to care about the place. Above and beyond all the border crossing questions that challenge some of these notions, the students are noticing something, and it’s new—and attractive—to many of them, at least in small doses.

Especially in some communities, to come into the community is to come into someone’s home. Often when you come to someone’s home, especially as a guest, you bring a gift. As Mikey pointed out, you don’t walk in and start measuring people, taking things.

Trust is a strong and fragile thing. Where I grew up, I learned that trust is somewhat provisional—you’re trusted as long as you know your place. Not much really came of the trust, but even that, and a lot else, could be withdrawn rather abruptly. In the projects I learned that trust, once given, could be tenacious. You could mess up time and time again, but if your heart was right, the trust never wavered—and, once given, would not be withdrawn except under extraordinary circumstances. Kind of like a lover.

One day, in class, we were talking about ways in which the students had entered or might enter the Wellston Loop community. The paraphrase about the ways the three professions enter a city came up. We’d also been looking at the last handout of the semester, the last “voices,” which are collections of quotes that I hand out periodically, that bear on whatever phase of the course we are in at the time.

As I stood there in front of the students, I noticed something myself for the first time, and I said: “Well, you know…the last word…of last quote…in your last voices…as non-academic as it sounds…is ‘love.’ What if you entered the community, not like an archeologist, or a sociologist, or an architect…but like a lover?”

GET REAL, PART TWO
RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS

The first year that we ended our class in the Wellston Loop area, we still had our final review on campus. It was just one of those academic assumptions, to have the review on campus, but it felt somehow wrong in practice. All the usual professionals came, but not many people from the community could make it. The whole thing was still kind of top heavy. But we had met a number of people in the community, and one of them—and then another—offered us space in the community for subsequent reviews. That changed everything.

The people “from the top” were still invited, but now they came to a little storefront on Hodiamont for the review—and so did the community members who could not make it to campus. They just walked in. The students presented a lot of “what-if” proposals and built a huge site
model of the neighborhood on which to display their ideas. It was standing room only, with lots of
conversation and argument: professional experts agreed and disagreed with community experts, and
with each other. The students were fascinated to hear the different viewpoints about something as
basic as what to do with the walls of the old JC Penney building (residents wanted to see murals; archi-
tecture professors were appalled at such a violation of the modernist aesthetic; residents said the
professionals seem to think that people like nothing more than blank slabs of concrete; and on and
on…). The students struggled with questions about what good design even meant.

If nothing else, the students realized that they would probably never again have this many
African-Americans on a review, even when their projects were located in African-American commu-
nities. One of the best moments came toward the last, when a small, elderly woman who had stood
silently at one end of the model for the entire review, finally said, simply, “I have been a school
teacher in this community for over forty years. Thank you for caring about our community.”

The next year, the African-American press (the St. Louis American) attended the review and
gave the program a half-page story and lead-off editorial, citing the program as a positive way to do
things, to detoxify the troubled relationships between the schools, the professions, and the commu-
nities.

The third year we held the review at one of the neighborhood churches.

But it was also true that, even though the students had been required to get input from at
least two community members as they developed their “what-if” proposals, many of them had
short-cut this part of the project, and the first real community input they got was at the final review.
It had simply been easier, more comfortable, just to play with their own ideas for two or three weeks.

It also became clear that talking with people—unless it was the right kind of talking (deep,
trusting, transformational; arising out of relationship, context, and shared experience)—was of little
more use than not talking at all.

Even in drawing, we talk about the need for enough lines, enough research, to support the
drawing itself, to make it meaningful, to justify its conclusions and assertions. “Build relationships,
then structures”—this was as true of community work as it was of drawing, but it wasn’t happening.
Building enough relationships to support a drawing is, if not easy, at least clear-cut as to how to do
it; but to build the necessary relationships to support community work—that would require some-
thing more.

We decided, somewhat paradoxically, to do this not by going deeper into the making of the
“what-if” proposals, but by backing off from them entirely. You can only tread the same ground so
often before there is the expectation, either from yourself or from the community, to go further—
which a foundation level course and students cannot do. The decision had something to do with
community expectations, something to do with what students were ready or not ready to do as far as
building structures, but even more to do with what they were not doing as far as building relationships.
Again somewhat paradoxically, we realized that by making things less tangible in one way, we could
make them more tangible in another way.

So we backed off, slowed down, and thought about increasingly modest endings that would
nonetheless take us deeper into the community than we had ever gone before.

And we would do this by simply being there: walking around, meeting people, eating in the
restaurants, patronizing the businesses, going to Town Hall meetings, just being there in any respect-
ful way we could. The idea was for the students to get to know as many people as possible, and to
do this through mostly one-on-one relationships between students and members of the community.
Some of the community people were connected to local institutions and churches and not-for-prof-
its, but we resisted the temptation to hook up too exclusively with any single group, no matter how good they might seem or how convenient that might be. We did not want second-hand relationships: we did not want our experience filtered by someone else; we did not want our own reputation tethered to someone else’s, for better or worse. We wanted to be accountable ourselves, and we didn’t want our relationships sanitized, distracted, or limited by someone else’s sense of what needed to be done or who we needed to know. This was not a rejection of their knowledge and experience as individuals at all—quite the opposite; it was simply a desire to stand apart from any singular group, with its singular vision and direction, with its word-on-the-street reputation already cemented a certain way in the community. I wanted the students to figure out how to figure it out.

That was all well and good conceptually, of course; but as we went to the Town Hall meetings and ate in the restaurants and had our sidewalk conversations, we realized that we still weren’t getting to “the other side of the wall.” We were still walking by most places; we were still walking by the places where people actually live. We still had no idea what was really going on on the other side of most of those doors.

THE PHONE CALLS

I set aside several weeks at the end of the semester for the students “just to make a phone call” to arrange a time and place to get together with someone from the Wellston Loop community. I knew some of the people already; others signed up at Town Hall meetings or came to us through word of mouth in the neighborhood. At first, some of the students seemed to think they were getting off easy: all that time just to make a phone call and set up a meeting? That soon changed.

One of the students, Jake, wrote in his journal, “I knew that Kevin and I had struggled to get in touch with Eugene, but I was surprised to see that this was a common problem in the class. The ability to get in touch with people at any time is something that I take so for granted. I can talk to my friends via cell phone calls, house phone calls, texting, email, instant messenger, etc. Yet these people, who are only a few miles away from campus, are virtually impossible to get ahold of. It is interesting to see how communication is so impacted by wealth. I’m assuming that many of these people are so hard to get in touch with because their access to communication devices changes so often—maybe they can afford a cell phone one month, but the next month they run out of money. Maybe they have access to a computer this week, but not the next. Consistency and stability, in communication but also in life, are things we take for granted, but are huge privileges.”

Another student, Anna, wrote this: “Setting up a time that works
for all of our schedules becomes another issue. She is incredibly busy and we are trying to work around our class times and the weekends and Thanksgiving break. But I think we can learn a lot from this process alone. For one we now see a little insight into Gracie’s life. She is very busy...she told us that we could not meet on Sunday because she had a friend’s 100th birthday party, but afterwards she had to go to another friend’s teenage son’s funeral. It reminds me how much we take for granted.”

The students met with community members at McDonald’s, at churches, at places of work, but mostly in the residents’ own homes. Student after student remarked about the generosity and openness of the residents to allow them, the students, total strangers at first, into their lives and homes. And student after student returned to class amazed at the devotion of many of the residents to the neighborhood, and all they had done to try to make it better.

Andrew and John wound up helping Kenneth with supplies for a Thanksgiving meal for three hundred, largely homeless, people. Deborah and Rebecca made plans with Bernice for her Spring garden. Lyn and Michael painted Miss Lovie’s door and window frames, and Donesh built her a Christmas tree stand. Matt talked with Troy about his redevelopment ideas. Allison and Chris helped Francis organize a mailing for his charity organization. Sarah and Anna-Marie traded recipes with Gillia; and Shen and Phil went bowling and talked about the neighborhood with Derrick. Suzi, one of the residents, asked Michael and Taylor if they had learned about the Team Four Plan (they had): history playing itself out at the kitchen table. And on and on. Invitations to holiday meals, introductions to other friends and neighbors, invitations to get together again after semester break… all these followed, time after time. As Carolina wrote of her first meeting: “She said it herself, ‘This is the beginning of a beautiful relationship,’ and I believe her. I know this is just the very beginning, and I can’t wait to see where we go.”

The students began to realize, without being told, that the best way to begin to accomplish something was probably through simple, everyday things—that you could accomplish more, in many ways, just by playing with the grandchildren or potting plants or shoveling snow than you could with serious discussions of design ideas—which, nonetheless, often came up when the time was right.

Nor did all the community people agree with each other about their own neighborhood; some had faith, others had given up. Some of them knew lots of other people in the neighborhood, others barely knew their neighbors—which seemed to reinforce our decision to enter the neighborhood through lots of different people rather than hitching our wagon only to professionals or not-for-profits, much less to a single professional, or a single not-for-profit. Only through this kaleidoscope of people did the true picture of the neighborhood begin to emerge.

Sometimes the deepest concepts are embodied in the smallest gestures: on a sweet and funny personal level, Donesh observed that there is nothing quite like being called clumsy by Miss Lovie’s granddaughter to undermine any lingering assumptions of superiority. More importantly, that kind of interaction can also undermine, in the best possible way, any tendency to make working in the community the exercise in superiority that it so often becomes.

As Jodi says, “Regardless of terminology, relationship is the underlying principle of transformation.”

Indeed, it is instructive to compare students’ impressions of the Wellston Loop area before they have met people who live or work there, and afterward. It is similarly instructive to compare the impressions of students who are in the Community Building course to the impressions of students who are not, who have only been to the Wellston Loop to gather artifacts. In class one day, Michael said that another student, who had only been to the Wellston Loop area to take some pictures and bring back some trash, had said to Michael, “Wellston is a ghetto.”
I asked Michael, “What did you say to that?”

“I said, ‘No, it’s not.’”

THE MAP

The students had been mapping neighborhoods all semester, and now they were mapping the same place, the Wellston Loop area, over and over, as they learned more and more. They had to decide what went on the map, what this map (like the course) was even about. Layers of discovery (and ignorance) were being revealed daily. They talked about what they knew, how they came to know it, if it should go on the map or not, what their thinking had been like last month...two weeks ago...a day ago—and how incomplete their thinking had been (and still was). It woke a few of them up when they realized how wrong they would have been if they had based their conclusions only on what they’d known or thought at the start. On the map, they also had to find ways to prepare for what they did not yet know.

They didn’t just mark people and places on the map; they made connections among them—until the “map” began to look more like a fabric...a fabric made up of memory and relationship and friendship. It got denser and denser—anything but the tabula rasa the area might have been mistaken for earlier.

Several years ago a visiting professor gave the students the program of a fashion show in a space between two buildings downtown. It was something of an attempt to address the sitelessness (the play on “sightlessness” is all but irresistible here) of earlier programs. When reviewers asked how, since there was a site now, the site was represented in the students’ work, and how it had affected their designs, the reviewers’ attention was directed to two vertical pieces of cardboard: that was downtown, that was how it had affected their work.

As the Community Building students stood looking at their emerging “map,” they understood: This is what you enter. This is what you build in, not just on.

ENDING AT A BEGINNING

...And just as we’re beginning to figure out what is going on, the semester ends, in the middle of a breath, as it were, in a deliberate anti-climax, at a beginning, at a point of entry. To be continued. Not to be pushed to some premature product to present to reviewers. We even completely dropped the final review (much to the surprise of former students who couldn't imagine the course without the final event they had experienced). No more models, no more “what-if’s.” No closure. Merely what the
students had actually done, the relationships they were just beginning. The students came to understand, among other things, that this had not just been foreplay for something else, that this was the thing itself—this was the education, this was the transformation. Whatever followed, followed. But what they had done was its own end, as well as a possible means—and a necessary one, if subsequent things are to be done right. To have a record of it all, the students would also create a book in which they would document the course and the relationships they have begun with people in the community—and hope to continue right through graduation in a few years.

The last day of class we finally address a reading that was assigned the first day of class: “What is Education For?” by David Orr. Each of the students also shares some story with the group—about themselves, about the class, about the person(s) they met in Wellston. It is at this point that the students realize, more than ever, that they have become their own community, even though there is so much they did not and still do not know about each other.

The students also have to answer, yet again, another one of those questions from earlier in the year: “How are you underprivileged? And don’t tell me you’re not.”

(We might all do well to try to answer that one. You, for instance. How are you underprivileged? And don’t tell me that you’re not.)

“OUTCOMES”

Some years ago, I was a guest, along with one of the former mayors of St. Louis, on Greg Freeman’s radio talk show. A listener called in, fed up with St. Louis, ready to get out of here, off to some “better” city where they’d already solved all their problems. I listened, and then I told him, in so many words: I think there are two kinds of people—those who want to go to some place where other people have already done all the hard work and all you have to do is enjoy yourself, and those who want to stay and do that hard work themselves and make the change. I think the caller hung up on me. Maybe we were talking about two different kinds of lovers….

Everybody wants to hear about outcomes. One of the outcomes I notice in my students is the shift in their lenses, their sense of their own normativeness. I had to learn this myself, years ago, in the projects. Something as simple as expecting the City Faces kids to (be able to) show up consistently, or to (be able to) bring pencils from home…and then dealing with my own frustrated expectations…these were my first clues that my norm was not the norm.

This relates to a larger issue, I think: that, when we propose to “make things better,” we have to have the sense to ask things like: Better for whom? or: Better by whose standards? Who has a voice in these things? How does your work leave people better off—on their own terms? In a sense, the students have to develop their own—and maybe a new—set of values. So this becomes a kind of ethics course for some of them.

Reflecting on the value of relationships—not just formal, not just programmatic, but personal—is another outcome of the course—for all of us. As I walked down the hallway with Mrs. Vanderson one evening after a Ward 22 Town Hall meeting at which people had mentioned that they had seen students at one of the vacant lots, she just assumed that the students had been there to help clean up, to do something, and that I was looking for other similar projects for the students to do. That had not been the case at all, of course, but it only took me one night’s sleep to realize the gap between what the students had been doing and what Mrs. Vanderson had hoped they were doing, and that Mrs. Vanderson had the better idea.

Bernice got a similar message across to several of the students one evening in a humorous and affectionate—but pointed—parting shot: “Don’t come back until you’ve done something!”
Merely talking isn’t the answer. Even doing something as good as tutoring or visiting nursing homes…if it doesn’t last, it probably still isn’t the right answer—not if the class activity ends while the need still exists. After I told my students about the conversation with Mrs. Vanderson, they debated for close to an hour about the right way to approach cleaning up a lot without giving off messages of condescension or presumption—and showed a good deal more thought than many of their elders do about such things.

Because the real goal here is, or should be, transformation: transformation for the students, transformation for the residents, transformation for the community, transformation for education.

After the summer program had ended, one of the students, Liz, emailed me: “I just wanted to let you know that I’m glad seminar and our neighborhood tours were often really uncomfortable for me. There were lots of times when I needed to be challenged in my opinions, needed someone to push me to back-up what I was saying with evidence, needed to be nudged into being that much more honest and frank, rather than hiding behind what I thought I was supposed to say. I especially noticed this on our final wrap-up day, when I said that I would never have actually gone into a neighborhood like Wellston to talk to people…. After I implied that it would be too awkward and invasive on my part, you said that a lot of times when we ourselves are scared to go somewhere or scared of people, we ‘flip it’—that is, we rationalize our own fear by saying that we would only make other people, the ones we fear, uncomfortable. You were so right. I was afraid to say it, because I thought it might sound classist or racist or just plain ignorant, but the truth is, I would never have gone to a neighborhood like Wellston because I would be downright scared to go. I wouldn’t try to talk to strangers on the street there primarily because I would be terrified of how they might react to my intrusion, and only secondarily because I might feel bad about intruding.”

As of this writing, the new set of relationships is just beginning between the students and members of the community; we will see which of them last, and what form they take. Trying to do things the right way is no guarantee of anything. You may or may not get support from the community, even when you do what they think you should do; you may or may not get support from academia, even when you do what they think you should do. All my experiences with City Faces and in the Wellston Loop up to this point suggest to me that successful community work requires making a deep and sustained commitment to a place, while remaining flexible programmatically: a literal and metaphorical (and even, in a sense, spiritual) place where students from all levels and backgrounds can come together with community members of all levels and backgrounds—being there long enough and deep enough to discover needs as they arise and address them together over time.

Yet if what I hear from many sources has any truth to it, every year promising academic initiatives, things being done right, wither and die for lack of support—or else become extra-curricular labors of love—and disappointment. Just as later courses need appropriate foundations, foundation courses need appropriate follow-through. The questions for any community initiative are always the same: What gets built on in the school—and therefore builds in the community? What gets abandoned in the school—and therefore abandons the community? And what gets diverted into something that provides follow-through for the students but not for the community, that leaves the community still begging for follow-through? So many borders to cross.

Still, the response over the years from the community to the students has been gratifying. Offers of class space in the community, meaningful relationships and friendships (some already long-term), tangible plans in progress (a teen center/business incubator), and positive coverage in the minority press attest to the fact that much of the community believes in what we are doing, which doesn’t always happen. And this year the students have made efforts to be there even more deeply, more lastingly. For many people in the Wellston Loop area, we are now part of the community.

The power of just being there….
Lisa, a Wellston Loop resident, called me the other day, and we talked that evening. She had heard about our class from her grandma, who lives down the block. We talked about the election. We talked about the class, what we all might do. She can’t wait to meet some of the students. She said, apropos of the course, the election, all of it: “Everybody has to step up to the plate now; everybody—black, white—has to let go of where they’ve been; everybody has to change.”

Which somehow makes me think of what Kenneth, another Wellston Loop resident, said to me: “Tell me all that is in your heart, brother, and I’ll tell you all that is in mine.”

**WHY IT’S ALL SO HARD…**

All of this, of course, is very messy and very time-consuming; very unpredictable, and often quite un-measurable. Who needs it?

At the most mundane level, there are simply issues of discomfort when contacting people: making phone calls, introducing yourself, trying to keep the person on the other end from thinking you’re a fool and hanging up on you—when it would be so much easier just to short-cut it all and spend two weeks slaving over a basswood model in the classroom. There can be issues of resistance on both sides, over-expectation or under-expectation, hostility or just simple naïveté. There can be student frustration when community members don’t respond as the students think they should, and community frustration when the students don’t respond as the community members think they should—and faculty frustration with the whole thing. Things can fall apart at either end, the community or the academy.

Then there is the hoary—and probably false—argument between “design” and “social work”—and about multi-disciplinary work in general: It must be design first, then community; it must be community first, then design…. If one must be sacrificed, be sure it is community, not design…if one must be sacrificed, be sure it is design, not community…. Design is the goal, the community is the vehicle; community is the goal, design is the vehicle…. All of which suggest either a false dichotomy or some false or incomplete definition of design. As Krista suggested, with graceful simplicity, “Maybe the most successful architects are those who are also anthropologists and sociologists.” (And lovers.)

There is the similarly ongoing debate about what students are ready to handle and when. Again, everything that my experience with students—in the projects, at Washington University—has taught me is that students are capable of more than we think
they are. The first time is always the first time, so the sooner the better. And complexity is something they need (and usually want) to learn to navigate, so, again, the sooner the better. Withhold too much for too long, and students begin to assume that the parts they know are the whole, and dislodging over-simplified thinking later can be difficult. Where better to model complex, lateral, inter-disciplinary thinking than at the beginning? Why schools would want to keep reality at bay is a question to which I have yet to hear a really convincing answer.

All of this, of course, relates to the debate over values. Everything we do contains implicit value judgments, whether it is having students base designs on trash, or whether it is withholding complexity until someone deems the students ready. These decisions and values are, again of course, intimately related to much larger questions: What kind of students are we turning out? What are the values we are sending out into the world? What awareness of the world do students leave here with? What are their goals? You can have all the latest information and still not have a clue about how to use it, or why. These are not just skill sets we are talking about here, but ways of being in the world.

And this, in turn, can raise the suspicion of those who assume that, because you ask the questions, you think you have the answers. But simply asking about values, when these decisions affect the built and social world that we live in, should not be particularly controversial. Any building, any program, hits the ground somewhere, generally in the middle of people living their lives. As Jodi has written, “By developing curricula which raise questions regarding personal and professional accountability for the status quo, within the context of a broader social and cultural encounter…on a broader terrain which encompasses the broader implications of what learning might be…I am a better professor and my students are better designers.”

There are other obstacles, too, from other directions: to some people already working in the “real” world, students just get in the way, with their idealism and never-ending questions. Some of these people, even more than academics, feel that they have the answer and the students just need to get with the program or get out of the way.

Finally, the word on the street—about programs, organizations, what needs doing and how—is often very different from the word in academia. It is regrettable when, on one hand, struggling communities look to academia, one of the pinnacles of any community, for help and support, while academia, on the other hand, expects to get support from the community…with the result that little or nothing that needs to get done gets done. And the power structure—in the community, in academia, the gap between them—remains in place. Business-as-usual education, if it does nothing else, “certainly reproduces structures of power.” Jodi again.

It is unlikely that these debates will be resolved to everyone’s satisfaction any time soon. It takes a strong academy not to respond to all this by short-cutting or sanitizing community work, or withdrawing from it completely.

...AND SO IMPORTANT

Architects build walls, literally and figuratively. The concern that they exhibit for persons on both sides of the wall is a test of the fullness of their vision and the nature of their values on a personal level, as well as an argument for (or against) the nature of design on a professional level.

Architects, unlike artists, must turn outward. The ability to turn outward in a way that bridges the gaps of mistrust and elitism, specialization and inequity, is a forceful argument for the power of good design well applied. Not everyone embraces this challenge, of course. It reminds me of an article I read recently about doctors in training. One of the doctors, speaking of inequities in health
care, lamented, “If the doctors are not going to address it, how will it ever be taken care of?” I think one could say the same thing about inequities and health issues in the built environment.

Or in education: A community member who came to one of our reviews said that he loved what we were doing in the community, but we needed more black kids in the course. My first, rather flippant, thought was, “Take that one up with the University.” (Actually, the University is trying.) But then I had a second thought: the hopeful possibility that courses like this, working and visible in the community, might themselves be one way to attract students to the school, to the profession, to make a difference.

At the end of my City Faces presentation, I usually talk about power and values. I know a lot of people in the projects who have good values but lack power. I know a lot of people in academia who have power but lack certain values, at least in the application, which is the only place they really count.

One time, after the City Faces kids had left the studio in the projects, Jovan and I were cleaning up. Tucked in with a lot of other drawings of butterflies and flowers, we found something entirely different. It was a drawing by a little nine-year-old girl, Michelle. The drawing was split down the middle vertically, with a face—her face—at the bottom, also split in half. The left side of her face was crying, and at the top of the left side of the drawing she had written, “This is life for us now.” She had drawn blood, guns, dead bodies. On the right side of the drawing, her face was smiling, and she had drawn a picture of children playing jump rope and hopscotch. The words at the top of the right side said: “This is what we want but don’t know how (to) make it that way.”

She’s nine years old. She’s not asking for a lot. She just wants to play jump rope and not get shot. Like you’d want for your kids. She shouldn’t have to figure out “how to make it that way” on her own. But, to paraphrase the article about doctors, “If we are not going to address it, how will it ever be taken care of?” If we are not going to do it, who will?

In one of the more startling journal entries this year, one that surely relates to border crossing and that question about the kids in the playgrounds in Kinloch and New Town, Phil recounted a conversation he had had over Thanksgiving break… and showed us what we are still up against: “It isn’t nearly the same to see something, or experience it, and to read it in a history book or to talk about it in class. You don’t have the same understanding of certain issues when you live inside of them, and when you can drive to see them, and after getting tired can go back to your comfortable home. In my experience this layer of removal makes a big difference, because many of the people who I grew up with, who went to my white, suburban high school, were (and still are) racist and generally un-accepting. I tried to have a conversation over this break with three college freshmen, who outright stated that they were glad that Martin Luther King was assassinated. They seemed like ‘relatively’ sane and intelligent people otherwise.”

When “just being there,” is important as it is, becomes “just being here”—when there becomes here—then a major part of our transformation will have taken place. Perhaps then Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “beloved community” might become more than just “broken and scattered, an eschatological hope,” and we might all more often have that unexpected sensation deep down inside that we are most surely coming home.

In City Faces, I lost control and gained a program—and a lot more. Knowledge is often thought of as conferring power, hence control. The more knowledge you have, the more control
you have. But the fact is that you can do things very “wrong” (that is, based on something other than real knowledge) and still maintain a high degree of control...over whatever is left. One day in Community Building, Michael nailed this paradox to the wall when, subverting my expectations for what he was about to say, he said, with Zen-like succinctness and clarity: “The more knowledge you have, the more you lose control.”

DANCING WITH ACADEMIA
(“IT COULD BE SAN FRANCISCO”)

Humility—a willingness to admit your own weakness, your own ignorance, your own vulnerability—it works in the community, and it can work in the classroom, too. Working together, tapping into each other's resources (and not just people who think as we do, but people who disagree with us, too)—this increases learning and often gains respect even as it undermines the standard level of academic distance and control. Even if we can't quite bring ourselves to admit that, yes, “I might be wrong...,” I think we could all at least bring ourselves to say, as Bobby Kennedy often did, “I think we can do better.”

I still have lots of questions about what we’re doing and how we’re doing it. I’m not at all sure I’m making all the right decisions on any of these things, but I keep trying, we keep trying—gaining, losing, growing—often in a very crooked, loving line.

I know we can do better.

For some people in academia, speculation and theory occupy a place high above local community work; for others, the opposite is true—and students are often left either to choose sides or to try to put the pieces together on their own. Is it possible, finally, to get the two next to each other, in actual dialogue, rather than two separate monologues, one always being above or below the other, one always being silenced or suppressed?

One time I sat in on a design review in which the conversation became about whether the student’s design looked more like a tulip or a milk drop. This semester, during reviews, I learned that the power station just north of the Riverfront could be better used as an opera house, and that “there is nothing” in Carondelet Park. Another time I overheard some students talking about their studio projects: it had been a highly speculative, site-less project for most of the semester, but toward the end of the semester the students were photographically collaging their projects into landscapes—nothing to do with climate or terrain that might have informed the project itself; just a graphic, visual afterthought. Several students were looking at one particular collaged landscape. They wondered where such a place might be. They looked at the mountains, the sky, the water; then somebody laughed and said, “Well, I guess it could be San Francisco!”

Speculation, of course, will and should always have its place if education is to move forward. But if it is also important to acknowledge and assess the impact of speculation when in lands in real people’s real lives, and if we choose to make a larger goal of education the contribution to our world’s health, the creation of community (however we define the word by now)—especially Martin Luther King, Jr’s “beloved community”—then schools will also ensure as significant a place in the curriculum for deep and lasting community work and relationships as they do for individual speculation. No more either/or. No more superiority and separation. The oft-heard concern in academia that “the students need to know more about architecture before they make proposals” will be matched by its companion concern, that “students need to know more about the community before they make proposals.”
“Everybody has to change,” says Lisa. And in the process, everyone is changed.

John Perkins, in his autobiography Let Justice Roll Down, said simply: “We had to need each other.”

WHO’S NOT HERE? (TAKE TWO: CONCLUSION)

Meanwhile, St. Louis’ statue of Martin Luther King, Jr., sits up in Fountain Park, surrounded by a fence, where white folks rarely go.

Whenever Jamala comes to talk with my students, she asks them a question, which is essentially this: “To what extent are you willing to make social justice a subtext of anything you do?”

In his journal, Jake came to this conclusion: “I think there is an understandable yet disturbing tendency for the middle-upper class (student) to think that when they do an act of service for a lower-class community, it is almost entirely one-sided and generous only in one direction. The subconscious reasoning taking place...is this: I’m clearly of higher socio-economic class than the poor, so therefore I’m in a position to help them.” Although such rationale doesn’t appear to be a problem at first glance, this reasoning completely ignores the ability of the poor to teach/give us something too. There are so many other things to a community besides the wealth and social class of its residents; the middle-upper class (students) often forget that these poorer communities might be able to teach us a thing or two about overcoming adversity and coping with hardships, or on the other side of the spectrum, happiness and social capital. In essence, the doer of community service is the receiver of community service.”

This is the kind of inversion Carl would understand. Carl is a homeless man with whom I have become friends. Right before Thanksgiving he handed me a thank you card and told me to tell my Washington University students about a church in the area where they can get free meals if they need them. As a homeless man, Carl sees his looking out for the welfare of the Washington University students as part of his way of just being here “to take care of each other.”

The power of just being here....

That first day—actually the second day, when we revisited the question, “Who’s not here?”—nearly a dozen students had responded to the question and still no one had offered one of the most obvious answers: African-Americans. Here we were beginning a course that would explore, among other things, the black/white fault line of many of our communities, and there were no black folks in our own community. Finally, I had to just ask straight out, “If any of you can see it, can one of you just say it?”
But in teaching there is always something you aren’t expecting—some comeuppance, something you’ve taught or the student has learned without either one realizing it, or just some insight you’ve never really considered until a student catches you completely off guard with a new answer to an old question.

So it was that, toward the end of the semester, as I was going over the journals, I came to a recent entry by a girl named Emily. She was writing about things she had learned since the first day of class—not just things she had learned, actually, but ways in which she felt she had changed, transformed. There was the sense that, for her, the end of the course was, in many ways, a beginning, not an ending. And then, in one little passage that was as simple-and-not-so-simple in its own way as my original question had been, she wrote:

“This makes me think back to the first day of Community Build when Bob asked us ‘Who’s not here?’ Now I can honestly answer and say…in the beginning…I was not here.”
Endnotes

3. The Team Four Plan was a St. Louis city plan begun in 1973 by Team Four, Inc. and revealed in the press in 1975. Based on principles of benign neglect and planned shrinkage, it recommended disinvestment in an area of the city bounded by Delmar, 20th Street, Natural Bridge, and the city limits at Skinker/Kienlen.
Bibliography


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The DeMario test was named after DeMario Gordon.

The “This is life for us now” drawing was by Michelle Short.

This article is also dedicated to the memory of Rodney McAllister (age 10), Terrance Hill (age 4), and Jermaine Roberts (age 1)
About the Author

Bob Hansman received his BFA (Drawing and Painting, English Literature, Religious Studies) from the University of Kansas in 1970 and has been milking that little BFA for all it’s worth ever since. Highlights of his college years were meeting Coretta Scott King and Bobby Kennedy and getting beaten up by members of the Ku Klux Klan, and ever since then he has been making up his life as it goes based on the lessons he learned then. Much to his own surprise, he wound up an Associate Professor in the Washington University School of Architecture (now part of the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts), where, in addition to teaching studio and drawing courses, he has developed a course—Community Building, Building Community—that brings Washington University students and members of the Wellston Loop / Ward 22 communities together to discover opportunities for shared personal and community involvement. In 1994 he founded and still co-directs (with his adopted son, Jovan) City Faces, a year-round art and mentorship program for kids living in "the projects" downtown; Jovan was one of the kids in the program that first year. For his teaching at Washington University, Mr. Hansman received an Emerson Electric Excellence in Teaching Award in 2000 and a Washington University Founders Day Distinguished Faculty Award in 2001. For the City Faces program, he was included in Coming Up Taller, a publication of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, in 1996 and received a Missouri Arts Award in 1997. He also received a Washington University Bob and Gerry Virgil Ethic of Service Award in 2005, and Mr. Hansman and Jovan together received a FOCUS St. Louis "What's Right With The Region!" Award in 2008. This article is dedicated to Keenan Johnson, who is nine years old at the time of this writing.
Chapter 8
“Legislation:”
Making the Promise of St. Louis a Reality

The last chapter of the 1907 plan was a series of proposals for implementing the plan. For the most part, the report concerned itself with calls for new legislation to enable the City of St. Louis to carry out the proposals of the five planning reports. Chaired by John F. Lee, the Legislation committee also contained such visionaries as Luther Ely Smith, the St. Louisan who first proposed the Jefferson Memorial.

The report opens with a quick review of the five primary planning components: 1) the public buildings group, 2) the proposal for a network of civic centers, 3) the inner and outer park systems, 4) the street and riverfront plan, and 5) the municipal art commission. But it did not take Lee and his cohorts long to get down to brass tacks. As they told their fellow St. Louisans, the Civic League had not made precise estimates of what the plan would cost, but a realistic guess was somewhere around $25 million—approximately $750 million in today’s money. While that may not sound like much when we are now talking about a trillion dollars for this and a trillion dollars for that, it still represented an investment equal to about twice the cost of the I-64 renovation. The committee was not a bunch of “Polly-Annas.” They were quite clear that implementing the plan would take somewhere between 10 and 20 years (an estimate surprisingly accurate) and would require a financial commitment on the part of the citizens.

According to the committee there were two standard ways of paying for the improvements. One was to raise tax revenues. What they proposed though was not raising the tax rates but the percentage of assessed valuation that was actually taxed. The second was to sell more bonds which in effect, meant increasing the city’s indebtedness. And as they pointed out, St. Louis had one of lowest levels of public debt of any major municipality in the country. For them, taking on additional debt to pay for the improvements would more than pay for itself.

However, the method that the committee really favored was a method that had been in use for several years in Europe, called excess condemnation. Under excess condemnation, property not directly involved in the improvement would be acquired through eminent domain along with the targeted property, and the city would realize the increased value when it resold the property. “If a municipality expends millions of public revenue for an extensive improvement which greatly enhances the value of a contiguous property,” they argued, “then the municipality should reap at least a portion of the benefits.” It was a radical notion then just like it is a radical notion now. But what it showed and why it is still important today is that the League was willing to take risks to make their visions a reality.

The second major recommendation that the committee made was proposing the creation of a new legislative body that would create and maintain the park improvements proposed by Kessler and the Parks committee. The most ambitious component of the parks plan was building a park system beyond the city limits. The Missouri Constitution allowed municipalities to own land outside of city limits. The problem though was control. The city could not control public land inside St. Louis County. What the committee proposed—anticipating the Great Rivers Greenway District by almost a hundred years—was creating a new corporation or authority that would build and oversee the system. As Lee and the committee explained, the board of this new authority would be “composed of representatives of the city and the county.” Even in 1907, the League already knew
that the ability of St. Louis—the real St. Louis—to realize its greatness depended upon regional cooperation. Moreover, just like the authors who have contributed essays for this chapter, the League was quite emphatic that everyone had to work together and pull their own weight. Speaking of this new corporation and the revenues it would need, the committee maintained that since both city and county would benefit, “for that reason the county should bear its due proportion of the cost of establishing and maintaining an outer park system.” It seems to be a lesson that the region is constantly learning and re-learning.

Although the committee made a few other smaller recommendations, such as proposing that the federal government should transform the Jefferson Barracks into a national park, the last major suggestion of the committee was a call for a reworking of the city’s charter. For the committee, the charter which had been last been revised in 1876 was a nineteenth century document that was simply not up to enabling St. Louis face the problems of the new industrial city of the twentieth century.

Citing numerous limitations on the power of the city to address day-to-day challenges, Lee and his colleagues remarked that “all of these illustrations point to the need for a complete charter revision which would aid materially in realizing many of the improvements in the City Plan Report.” Now that the region is made up of hundreds of municipalities and taxing districts, one wonders if the region has the governmental structure to deal with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

So what kind of decisions should be made in the 21st century? Three authors tackle that question to wrap-up St. Louis Currents. James Evans begins by placing an importance on universities. He echoes a point that was raised by the Peirce Report a decade ago—that colleges and universities have great potential for the betterment of the region. Evans lays out the impressive contributions that the region’s institutions of higher education have made to the region, and the collective asset that they are. Colleges and universities have a significant economic impact on the region, they create a lifestyle that is desirable among young professionals, and are centers of diversity of all kinds. Evans points to the fact that a successful region is one that attracts and retains talented young people. Colleges and universities play a significant role. Further, he makes the case that support for institutions of higher education is support for the region as a whole. The return on that investment is quite high.

Robert Duffy, a man who has chronicled St. Louis for many years, takes a critical eye toward regional decision-making. Using the Arch and downtown as his example, Duffy examines the issues, the excuses, the possibilities, and the results. He asks an important question: how can we get good ideas implemented? He devises a simple answer: it’s all about leadership. Duffy goes on to outline what good leadership is, what good leadership does, and (with all due respect to those in leadership positions) why it’s a scarce commodity in the 21st century. Part of being a successful region lies in the ability to carry things out, and that’s a lesson straight from the 1907 City Plan. Perhaps St. Louis will be well-served by a strong dose of “moxie and imagination.”

The last word goes to Les Sterman, and his message is accurate, timely, and thought-provoking. Sterman has been at the center of regional decision-making for many years and has seen first-hand how good ideas ebb and flow. He is very explicit in identifying the region’s shortcomings: tax inefficiencies, economic and racial disparities, and just plain denial to name a few. The problems of the St. Louis region are not necessarily new, nor are they easy to solve. St. Louis is a very old place and its problems are deeply-rooted. One has to wonder if “sunbelt cities” would be as successful as they are today had they carried two centuries of political baggage. It is not enough to identify the problems, though. Sterman goes on to lay out eight areas of focus for the coming years—all of which can be seen as building blocks to a new regionalism. Problem-framing, regional
planning, and rebuilding public trust are only a few of the steps he outlines to make St. Louis a great city again. Bold ideas are on the table—and so is a roadmap to implement them.
HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE WELL-BEING OF THE ST. LOUIS REGION
James D. Evans, Ph.D.

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE WELL-BEING OF THE ST. LOUIS REGION

Higher education in the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Area has a pervasive influence on the health and prosperity of this region. The St. Louis community is blessed with six four-year independent teaching universities, two major independent research universities, two prolific public research institutions, a growing four-year state teacher’s university, and two thriving junior college districts – not to mention more than a dozen proprietary post-secondary schools in St. Louis and adjacent communities.

DIRECT REVENUES

Area colleges and universities have an immediate effect on our community’s economy through their annual revenues. Postsecondary institutions in the St. Louis area collectively employ more than 31,000 individuals and serve more than 152,000 students per year.\(^1\) Based on available data, we can reasonably assume that the yearly incomes of the postsecondary schools in the St. Louis area sum to approximately $2.5 billion, which is the *direct stream* of cash flowing into this region from college and university business activity.\(^2\) However, the financial stimulus does not end there.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Businesses, including institutions of higher learning, generate a second-level boost to commerce through a type of ripple effect that occurs when cash is transferred from consumers to providers. In the business of higher learning, this ripple effect includes extra money spent by students in addition to their college tuition and fees; thousands of jobs created and supported via the construction projects, goods, and services drawn into our community by the postsecondary schools; as well, the money earned and spent by the employees of all of the vendors involved with those enterprises. The combination of the immediate and secondary monetary consequences of
this collective economic activity is referred to as the economic impact that an industry has on a region’s commerce, and it is usually inferred by doubling a business’s annual revenues. Higher education’s annual fiscal impact on the St. Louis region, then, is an estimated $5 billion.

TERTIARY EFFECT: SPINOFFS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Entrepreneurial Spinoffs

Shane (2004) has noted that universities spur their local economy via four means: (a) through “localized economic impact,” which already has been addressed here; (b) by generating new jobs, which will be discussed later in this piece; (c) through university-based technological advances; (d) relatedly, through production of new products. This section examines the latter two catalysts.³

Each of the four research universities in our region contributes in its own way to the development of technologies, businesses, and product innovation or refinement. In 2006, for example, the University of Missouri–St. Louis (UMSL) joined forces with Express Scripts to found a research center designed to be an IT incubator with the purpose of assisting fledgling companies driven by high-performance computing.⁴ This kind of initiative not only improves technological capabilities and services for humankind in general but can potentially spawn a wealth of new employment opportunities for the increasingly technological new college graduates produced by area institutions.

Washington University in St. Louis has long been known for its contributions to research and development in the disciplines of biology and plant science, having worked for many years with the Monsanto Corporation and the St. Louis Center for Emerging Technologies. The patents and products produced by these entrepreneurial partnerships enhance not only area commerce and industry but the region’s image as well. These outcomes, in turn, tend to attract additional grant monies, businesses, and professionals to St. Louis.

To the same productive ends, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) sponsors the National Corn to Ethanol Research Center, which is a major participant nationally in the nascent but important industry of renewable fuels. The commercial promise of that budding industry is large, and, through the involvement of SIUE, our Metropolitan Area will likely be a hub for this mission-critical enterprise.

Saint Louis University (SLU) has not only sparked innumerable area business startups through its Center for Entrepreneurship but also has registered literally dozens of product patents stemming from scientific research conducted on its campus.⁵

Citing data provided by the National Science Foundation, Bezold (2005) noted that our region’s four research universities accounted for a $478 million investment in basic and applied scientific research in 2002.⁶ The immediate and indirect economic impact of that investment on our community must be considered substantial by any measure.

Community Health Spinoffs

Beyond their material and commercial thrusts, universities generate a variety of other desirable enterprises in their communities, including several health-care and medical research initiatives. Washington University and SLU have earned acclaim for their progressive research
and treatment programs in St. Louis hospitals. Washington University’s medical school works with Children’s Hospital and Barnes-Jewish Hospital to provide both groundbreaking medical research and state-of-the-art treatment options for the region’s citizens. In another sector of the city, SLU Hospital serves as a teaching venue for future medical professionals even as it provides more than 350 beds dedicated to progressive patient care. It is also certified as a level-1 trauma treatment center for the region. Would the level of medical care be as high if our treatment facilities were not associated with world-class research universities?

The other area research universities complement Washington University and SLU with their own doctoral-level medical specialties. SIUE offers doctoral studies in dental medicine and pharmacy, whereas UMSL operates a college of optometry.

Our country suffers – and will likely continue to suffer – from an intensifying shortage of skilled nurses. Thanks to the bounty of active collegiate schools in our geographic domain, however, we will continue to receive relatively better nursing coverage than many of our sister regions in Middle America. Our research universities join McKendree University, Maryville University, Webster University, and the area community colleges to offer degrees in nursing, ranging from the associate’s level through the Ph.D.

Many other programs complement those mentioned above to support this region in regard to health care. For example, Maryville offers a physical-therapy doctorate, and Lindenwood University provides programs leading to bachelor’s and master’s degrees in athletic training, exercise physiology, and health management. A number of area schools also produce psychologists, professional counselors, and gerontologists, many of whom set up practice right here.
Educational Spinoffs

Faculty members, students, and administrators from our regional universities have been venturing far outside their ivory towers for decades and, in fact, frequently establish mutually beneficial partnerships with both the K-12 sector and the junior college districts. Teach for America, for instance, has an active branch in St. Louis that employs the talents to about more than 150 recent college graduates, many from the St. Louis region. Most of these civic-minded young adults were referred to the Teach for America program by their professors. Several of those referring professors work at area universities and are involved with Teach for America in the role of mentor and trainer. The purpose of Teach for America is to bring educational equity to K-12 schools by enjoining exceptionally talented recent college graduates to commit two years as teachers in selected urban and rural schools. This region can make a contribution of this socioeconomic significance because it has so many ambitious colleges to help supply the talent, training, and administration for such a promising project.

Another connection between our postsecondary institutions and our K-12 schools is Missouri’s Early College Start program, also known as Dual Enrollment. Most of the area universities – both public and independent – participate in this initiative, which enables academically qualified juniors and seniors to take standard college-level classes at their respective high schools, for both high school credit and university hours. The program, which requires the university partner(s) to design the courses and approve the instructors, encourages the students to continue their collegiate studies upon completing high school while providing them with a fast start at the postsecondary level. The net effect of these efforts is to increase the percent of the region’s population possessing a postsecondary degree. As will be established later, that boost, in turn, enhances the overall prosperity of the region.

Charter schools in St. Louis give K-12 students access to superior educational
options. The St. Louis City School District now includes 15 charter schools serving more than approximately 6,000 students, and some of these institutions exhibit improved outcomes on standardized tests and graduation rates in comparison to traditional schools in the District. Each of these schools must be monitored and supervised by a non-profit entity, and many of the sponsors in and around St. Louis are area universities, including these: UMSL, Harris-Stowe University, Missouri University of Science and Technology, SLU, Washington University, Missouri Baptist University, Webster University, and SLCC. Although not all charter school sponsors are colleges and universities, most charter schools in the St. Louis City School District sponsored by area postsecondary schools. The latter provide pedagogical expertise based on their teacher education programs. They also foster a climate of assessment, which is a basic feature of charter schools.

In recent years federal, state, and local governments, as well as the entire range of education sectors, have bemoaned the comparative slippage of the U.S.’s schoolchildren in mathematics, science, and technology. In response, many public and private projects have been initiated to make science education both more prominent and more effective. A number of St. Louis area colleges and universities have been at the core of these special programs. For a couple of examples, both SLU and Lindenwood University are serving as host institutions for FIRST Robotics competitions, and St. Charles Community College (SCC) annually hosts the Missouri Tri-County Regional Science and Engineering Fair. The rationale for involving postsecondary institutions in these competitions is that holding the sessions on a college or university campus will likely heighten the interest of the K-12 participants in pursuing a college education.

Along similar lines, Lindenwood and SCC presently are working with St. Charles County’s Partners for Progress organization (a civic and planning group of business leaders) to create, fund, and operate a Regional METS (Mathematics-Engineering-Technology-Science) Coalition that will provide area teachers with advanced professional education in the teaching of mathematics, science, and technology. This project will emphasize the use of the exceptionally-high-bandwidth Internet II in K-12 science and mathematics classes. Its objective is to help our K-12 schools appreciably increase student interest in math and science studies and ultimately to improve the number of scientists, technologists, engineers, and science and math teachers in and around St. Louis.

Nearly all of St. Louis’s four-year universities seek and foster articulation agreements with their junior-college partners, educationally prolific agreements that are too numerous for individual mention. One advantage of such pacts is that they lower the cost of a college education by enabling thousands of students to take their first-year and sophomore studies at community-college tuition rates. Another advantage is that associate’s-degree completers are encouraged and enabled to continue their collegiate studies toward bachelor’s degrees. A third, and most interesting, benefit is that unique bachelor’s-degree majors are made possible by combining the practical technology and skill banks of some community-college programs with the advanced business and teacher-education curricula of four year schools. A few examples in the St. Louis area include bachelor’s-degree programs in mortuary management, industrial technology education, and hospitality services management.

Government statisticians and futurists concur that the U.S. is about to experience severe teacher shortages in particular specialties. Although the Metropolitan Area will feel some effect of that crunch, we will be much better supplied with fresh teaching talent than
many other regions, simply because we have so many postsecondary institutions that produce teachers and school administrators. Universities in East Central Missouri and Southwestern Illinois collectively graduated more 3,431 K-12 teachers and administrators in 2007 – 1,146 at the bachelor’s-degree level, 2,182 at the master’s level, and 103 with doctoral credentials. The immediately preceding two years showed a similarly prolific degree-completion profile. The availability of many newly credentialed or re-credentialed K-12 professionals year after year makes our region desirable along a quality-of-life dimension as well as for a variety of economic reasons.

A number of our universities partner with areas school districts to offer professional-development opportunities and continuing education on numerous K-12 campuses. This form of educational outreach is geared toward practicing teachers. It helps ensure continuous quality improvement in the performance of the K-12 pedagogues as well as providing ample opportunities for them to improve their pay levels.

QUATERNARY IMPACT: POPULATING THE REGIONAL WORKFORCE

Our higher-education sector sponsors a fourth (but crucial) force in area commerce: the education and training of the professionals who sustain and enhance the operations that underlie economic impact. Colleges and universities in the Greater St. Louis Metropolitan Area continuously feed new degree holders into the business sector. In fact, we graduate in excess of 43,000 of these well-educated individuals annually. To the extent that they elect to pursue a family life and a career in, near, or around St. Louis, the whole community benefits in a host of ways. One fundamental variable is the earning power of degree holders: Using estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, Day and Newberger (2002) note that, relative to merely completing high school, having an associate’s degree will increase one’s lifetime earnings by $400 thousand and that earning a bachelor’s degree will hike lifetime income by about $900 thousand. What is more, a graduate education can double or triple one’s cumulative income in the long run, as shown in Figure 1. The powerful earnings stimulus provided by higher education opportunities potentiates the primary economic impact of the higher education sector by continuously feeding higher income earners into the local economy. Better remunerated residents have more discretionary income, which not only nourishes retail sales on a year-round basis but also yields more tax monies to support publicly funded initiatives, services, and jobs.

As well, a growing base of well-educated affluent professionals makes the community more attractive to startup enterprises and existing businesses looking to relocate to or branch into additional municipalities. The metropolitan area’s colleges, then, are an essential personnel engine that helps propel our collective prosperity in both a direct way, by supplying the region with new commerce and prosperous graduates, and indirectly, by ensuring an appealing workforce scenario for prospective and existing employers.
Economic Impact Revisited: Considering the Skill-Base Factor

Earlier in this chapter, it was estimated that the region’s postsecondary schools produce approximately a $5 billion economic impact on this area of the country. That estimate was calculated using the conventional “economic-base” approach, which considers the following factors: federal and state grants, tuition and fees garnered, augmentation of area commerce, and increments in incomes and job opportunities for community residents as a result of the presence of the university. Brown and Heaney (1997) described a second approach, which starts with a broader and farther perspective on the economic influences of higher education. This more inclusive “skill-base” approach starts with the economic-base factors and adds to them: A university does not just generate additional cash transactions, jobs, businesses, and tax monies in its community as a result of its day-to-day business operations. It also imbues its region with a skills-enhanced workforce – a population of workers with better developed literacy, numeracy, communication competence, and technical ability.

To the extent that these educated employees elect to live and work in the region that
contains their *alma mater*, that area of the county profits from a windfall of commerce and associated tax monies over a period that lasts as long as a community can attract and keep a majority of its postsecondary degree holders. The *cumulative effect* of a region’s perennial infusion of educated talent into its business sector means that the actual economic impact of higher education is many times that estimated from the conventional economic-base model alone. Brown and Heaney cite three skill-base analyses of higher-education impact (in Massachusetts, Maryland, and Illinois) illustrating that considering the workforce-skills effect of higher education multiplies economic-impact projections by factors of 19, 5, and 3, respectively. Applying the most conservative multiplier observed by Brown and Heaney to the “economic-base” estimate of $5 billion for the St. Louis region, we might expect a skill-base analysis to show that our colleges and universities make at least a $15 billion difference annually in the area’s economy when both long-term and short-term processes are considered.

**CHALLENGES WITHIN OUR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY**

The facts and perspectives covered so far indicate that the region’s colleges are a major economic boon in our daily lives and, as well, contribute in countless ways to the status of our healthcare and K-12 education sectors. Although the foregoing observations are collectively quite positive, however, they raise a pivotal question that merits our serious attention: Can our region continue to provide a work environment robust enough and a life space attractive enough to reliably engage and retain the commitments from a growing number of young professionals and businesses in the coming years – and, if not, what we can do to emend the situation?
Regional colleges and Universities supply the Metropolitan Area with more than 43,000 new graduates annually.

Data on the commercial and social/cultural appeal of the St. Louis region provide a moderately sanguine picture that suggests considerable room for improvement. Here are the facts that can be identified presently:

- According to records compiled by United Van Lines, Missouri holds a “balanced” position in the interstate migration competition: We have lost about as many residents as we have gained in recent years. In the same studies, Illinois lost more residents than it gained from year to year. Favorite destinations for the restless are several of the Western and Southeastern States.\(^{16}\)
- Annually Forbes.com develops and index of the “Best Places for Business and Careers,” based on the level of taxes and the cost of labor, energy, and office space. Unfortunately, no municipality in East Central Missouri or Southwestern Illinois makes the top 50 in that list.\(^ {17}\)
- On the positive side of the picture, Forbes.com recently placed St. Louis 15\(^{th}\) among the top 40 cities for young professionals. The magazine’s assessment took into account the relocation choices of new graduates of several of the most select universities in the country, as well as the ratio of salary level to cost of living, the number of premium job openings, and the number of young singles in a city.\(^ {18}\)
- The Forbes.com rating is consistent with available, though dated, empirical evidence. According to 2000 U.S. Census data on migration patterns of young, single, college-educated individuals – although now somewhat dated – St. Louis ranks 17 among the 20 US cities with the best inbound-to-outbound ratio for that population.\(^ {19}\) See Table 1.
• Although not generally available from most area universities, employment-destination percentages of two institutions indicate that about 75% of recent graduates obtain jobs in the metropolitan area. However, there was no information available regarding the effect of workforce drift on how long the typical graduate continues to work in this vicinity.

Positive indicators notwithstanding, there is fierce competition from other states and regions for the essential talent of our new university graduates. If we are earnest about proactively ensuring a healthy economic and cultural future for the metropolitan area, our task is clear: One of the most important present-day and future challenges for the St. Louis area is to develop incentives for attracting even more of its newly minted university alumni into careers in Eastern Missouri and Southwestern Illinois – and then keeping them around. We have a cornucopia of potentials and possibilities for our college-educated youth, but are we communicating that effectively? If not, it would be in our best interests – as well as theirs – to learn how to get the message across, a matter that will be addressed later in this chapter.

**WHAT YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WANT**

To keep premium talent in this part of the country, we educators and business leaders must become aware of and more sensitive to what degree holders in their twenties and thirties are looking for in both their careers and their communities.
Table 1. Net Domestic Migration of the Young, Single and College Educated for the 20 Largest Metropolitan Areas: 1995 to 2000

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose CMSA</td>
<td>7,039,362</td>
<td>103,641</td>
<td>54,173</td>
<td>49,468</td>
<td>198.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange County MSA</td>
<td>16,373,645</td>
<td>95,712</td>
<td>62,714</td>
<td>32,998</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Atlanta MSA</td>
<td>4,112,198</td>
<td>61,758</td>
<td>29,871</td>
<td>31,887</td>
<td>282.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Washington, Baltimore CMSA</td>
<td>7,608,070</td>
<td>90,851</td>
<td>65,382</td>
<td>25,469</td>
<td>102.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>New York, Northern New Jersey, Long Island CMSA</td>
<td>21,199,865</td>
<td>132,437</td>
<td>107,306</td>
<td>25,131</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dallas, Fort Worth CMSA</td>
<td>5,221,801</td>
<td>48,277</td>
<td>24,428</td>
<td>23,849</td>
<td>236.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Denver, Boulder, Greeley CMSA</td>
<td>2,581,506</td>
<td>41,851</td>
<td>22,172</td>
<td>19,679</td>
<td>264</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chicago, Gary, Kenosha CMSA</td>
<td>9,157,540</td>
<td>70,971</td>
<td>52,221</td>
<td>18,750</td>
<td>73.1</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Seattle, Tacoma, Bremerton CMSA</td>
<td>3,554,760</td>
<td>40,044</td>
<td>22,490</td>
<td>17,554</td>
<td>194.5</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Pheonix, Mesa MSA</td>
<td>3,251,876</td>
<td>29,209</td>
<td>15,441</td>
<td>13,768</td>
<td>250.5</td>
</tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Houston, Galveston, Brazoria CMSA</td>
<td>4,669,571</td>
<td>30,901</td>
<td>19,497</td>
<td>11,404</td>
<td>139.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Minneapolis, St. Paul MSA</td>
<td>2,968,806</td>
<td>28,760</td>
<td>18,511</td>
<td>10,249</td>
<td>123.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>San Diego MSA</td>
<td>2,813,833</td>
<td>30,701</td>
<td>23,618</td>
<td>7,083</td>
<td>99.5</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Miami, Fort Lauderdale CMSA</td>
<td>3,876,380</td>
<td>24,157</td>
<td>17,618</td>
<td>6,539</td>
<td>75.6</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Boston, Worcester, Lawrence CMSA</td>
<td>5,819,100</td>
<td>61,738</td>
<td>57,002</td>
<td>4,736</td>
<td>21.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Tampa, St. Petersburg, Clearwater MSA</td>
<td>2,395,997</td>
<td>16,172</td>
<td>11,687</td>
<td>4,485</td>
<td>116.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>St. Louis MSA</td>
<td>2,603,300</td>
<td>15,043</td>
<td>14,427</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Cleveland, Akron CMSA</td>
<td>2,945,831</td>
<td>14,948</td>
<td>15,911</td>
<td>-963</td>
<td>-15.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Detroit, Ann Arbor, Flint CMSA</td>
<td>5,456,428</td>
<td>27,407</td>
<td>28,591</td>
<td>-1,184</td>
<td>-10.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Philadelphia, Wilmington, Atlantic City CMSA</td>
<td>6,188,463</td>
<td>35,791</td>
<td>38,382</td>
<td>-2,591</td>
<td>-16.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The net migration rate is based on an approximated 1995 population, which is the sum of people who reported living in the area in both 1995 and 2000, and those who reported living in that area in 1995 but lived elsewhere in 2000.

What Executive Employees Want from Their Jobs

Heathfield (2008) reports that recent surveys by the Society for Human Resource Management and CareerJournal.com show the importance not only of compensation and benefits but also the career-development potential of one’s workplace and what a position offers in the way of “a new experience.” The upshot of these polls is that employees generally prefer a work environment that (a) provides for professional growth and upward mobility and (b) minimizes or avoids burnout. Consistent with these observations were the survey responses of human resources professionals, most of whom cited provision of tuition reimbursement for employees as the number-one program that employers use to retain workers. These survey outcomes corroborate Green’s (2006) conclusion that organizations can reduce employee attrition by establishing a “culture of development” that creates an atmosphere of learning and self-improvement with the work group.

The relevance of accessible and affordable higher-education programs to these interests is obvious. Just as obvious is the pivotal role that St. Louis’ colleges and universities play in making the Metropolitan Area attractive to upwardly mobile young adults.

What Young Executives Look for in Choosing a Community

Citing an aging workforce as a major socioeconomic concern for the U.S., Bullard stated that “cities are competing furiously amongst themselves to attract and retain that coveted demographic: the ‘young professional,’” defined as workers who are in fields that are fundamentally knowledge driven and technology reliant. Most of these fields and employees...
require a postsecondary degree.

Significantly, Bullard notes that today’s young professionals “look for a place to live first, and then they find a job.” That is, members of this prized group often give quality-of-life considerations a higher priority than a particular company or job when deciding where they will ply their skills. In fact, Bullard cites reports showing that about three quarters of workers under the age of 28 give substantial weight to the following job-context factors in making employment decisions: diversity in employment options within the community, civic service opportunities, and a wide range of recreational, entertainment, and artistic venues. These upwardly mobile job seekers can be picky simply because they are in great demand and they have so many potentially desirable location choices in today’s business environment.

Bullard’s observations shed light on the many reasons that St. Louis has a relatively strong inbound-to-outbound ratio in its young-professionals population. These reasons represent the abundance of preferred job-context conditions that characterize our region. Here are just a few of the desirable features of living and working in this metropolitan area, according to the St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association: affordable housing, vigorous social-life possibilities, desirable and healthy environment for families, innumerable recreational and entertainment options, community arts and science attractions, an abundance of acclaimed public spaces, the highest civic-service rate in the nation, better than average health care, and cultural diversity.

Although the RCGA did not specifically mention the contributions that regional postsecondary institutions make to creating and enriching the enviable job context we enjoy, the list of amenities stemming from our higher-education network is impressive.

**CREATING A DESIRABLE LIFE SPACE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS**

Our innovative and active group of colleges and universities helps ensure future growth and development by making the area more attractive to new businesses and talented, ambitious professionals, not only because rising businesses and upwardly mobile families demand higher-education opportunities and choice but also because those campuses offer cultural enrichment and a rewarding, meaningful life space. These value-added assets should not be overlooked or underestimated, for they represent crucial intangibles that help, in a very pervasive and powerful way, to attract and keep businesses and high-stakes talent in the Metropolitan Area. They are sources of an intangible excitement experienced by prospective residents and businesses that walk onto an area campus as they consider our region for their future home.
Beautiful and Useful Campuses

Many area institutions have campuses that are veritable gardens. Stately architecture combines with green spaces to create a park-like ambience enjoyed not only by the students, professors, and staff of the schools but also by thousands of campus visitors and residents of adjacent neighborhoods. Those campuses serve as hiking and biking havens, and often the schools’ athletics facilities are available for use by individuals and organizations from the surrounding community.

Libraries

University libraries are widely viewed as treasure troves of information, Web connectivity, social venues, and contemplative nooks. Although the general public cannot borrow library materials from every college or university, it is not at all unusual for average citizens, K-12 students, and their parents to access the rich resources within these productive spaces.

Arts and Entertainment

College and university mission statements often include reference to the purpose of contributing and nurturing “arts, culture, and enlightenment” within the general community. In no other way is this shared value of higher education more evident than in the art exhibitions, plays, concerts, and recitals that are frequently conducted on campuses as a part of the curriculums – and that often are open to the public. However, several of our universities have gone a step further by building professional entertainment spaces that rival many Broadway’s outlets. Several facilities come to mind, including Lindenwood’s J. Scheidegger Center, UMSL’s Touhill Center, and SLU’s Chaifetz Arena. These beautiful new performance venues, which
bring some of the world’s top entertainers and artists to the metropolitan area, are in addition to the dozens of older theatres and performance halls on many of the regional campuses.

**Speaker Series**

Virtually every postsecondary school in the St. Louis region offers some variety of speaker series, some that levy admissions charges on the general public but many that grant free access to anyone. Many of these presenters are figures of national and international note. Their talks bring new information and novel perspectives to community members in attendance, as well as igniting scholarly and political discussion and debate among students and faculty members.

**Evening Degree Programs**

Courses and academic majors offered after the typical workday hours have proliferated at a moderately high rate over the past several decades. This phenomenon likely resulted from a convergence of two modern-day middle-class norms: (a) the trend among employers to offer tuition assistance as a major benefit and (b) the progressively stronger desire among working adults to realize not only a living but also a life from their jobs. Opportunities for professional growth remain very strong incentives for employees to enter and stay at an organization. The area’s postsecondary schools fulfill this increasing need and, at the same time, further expand the region’s skill base by enabling employees who work full-time during the day to earn basic and advanced degrees in various fields through a plethora of evening programs.

These evening programs will become more important to commerce and community progress in the coming decades because three of every four of the fastest growing professions require a postsecondary degree.

**Diversity Exposure**

Bezold (2005) reported that 60 percent of Washington University’s students come from other states and countries. SLU has students from all 50 states and nearly 80 foreign countries. Lindenwood serves students from 45 states and 84 foreign countries, and Webster maintains a two-way avenue with several countries through its network of overseas campuses. In fact, all of the junior and four-year postsecondary institutions in the region sustain a significant, and in many cases growing, contingent of students from other countries. Further, all of St. Louis’s higher education institutions attract faculty members from other states and countries.

The intercultural mix deliberately designed, affected, and championed by our colleges and universities educates and enriches both their campuses and the communities that they serve. Most importantly, this human-capital enterprise equips all of us to more productively and harmoniously grow into our irreversibly global society. How far would our region have progressed in this modern-day Enlightenment without the influence wrought by its forward-looking campuses?
Outlook and Recommendations

Persuading more of our university graduates to actualize their professional lives here, rather than seeking their fortunes in other states and regions, will help make St. Louis not only younger but also fiscally and socially stronger. There are several steps we can take toward this objective.

Attracting and Keeping Young University Graduates in the Metropolitan Area

We must start by informing young adults about (a) the economic and lifestyle advantages of earning a college degree and (b) the availability of desirable – indeed, premium – career opportunities in the region. Annually, our postsecondary institutions hold several college fairs for high schools students and job fairs for university students, but those events would be more effective if they included brief informational and motivational sessions presented by young professionals who are working in desirable positions in the metropolitan area. Such sessions can be persuasive because the student career aspirants can readily relate to and believe first-hand accounts of success from other (slightly older and wiser) young adults who have been “around the block” in a particular vocation and really like their jobs.

It is not enough, however, just to invite high school students to the college fairs. We area professionals must actively and persistently reach out to the whole K-12 spectrum by establishing “career-information” speakers’ bureaus that operate regularly scheduled workshop programs throughout the K-12 school circuit. Let us get the students thinking and dreaming about fulfilling professional lives in the metropolitan area early and often. To complement the career-information speakers’ circuit, our higher education institutions should collaborate systematically with Partners for Progress, the RCGA, Civic Progress, and the Regional Business Council to conduct annual ad campaigns directed at area students from the kindergarten level through the senior year. Such a campaign would incur front-side outlay of money that would
be repaid one-thousand fold or more in future prosperity and advancement of the region. Persuading youthful talent to launch careers in this area is just an intermediate step. There will be ample incentives for our college graduates to jump the fence if we fail to attend to the widely expressed desire for professional growth and development options. Career development programs must become a regular part of organizational culture, and each worker’s growth plan and progress chart should be the highlight of his or her annual performance review. For the same reasons, it would benefit every organization and most of its employees to include lifestyle-enhancement workshops on its master calendar.

These suggestions represent what can and should be done to secure and strengthen our population of educated and technically capable workers. This chapter has discussed some of the significant ways in which our colleges and universities bolster the area workforce and economy. However, our educational institutions cannot perform these services optimally without endorsement and cooperation from area business, government, and community organizations.

Supporting Higher Education to Support Our Region

College affordability continues to be a very intense and controversial topic at the time of this writing. For many area students, access to college is itself dependent on affordability. Yet presently the State of Missouri is contemplating a reduction of funding for higher education. The proposed reduction is considered a cost-cutting measure designed to reduce pressure on tax revenues that are reeling from the economic recession of 2008-2009. That putative “remedy” is akin to the thinking of the shortsighted farmer who, according to fable, killed a goose that had been laying golden eggs so that he would be better off in the present at the cost of his financial future. Analogously, culling a hefty portion of funding for higher education would soon curtail the amount of available tax monies after a brief period of respite, for reasons discussed throughout this chapter. More than ever, it is crucial that state funds be invested to invigorate and improve higher education – not curtail it – through reasonable increases in direct funding to higher-education institutions, the Monetary Award Program (in Illinois) and Access Missouri grants for individual students, and workforce development programs. Troublingly, Missouri already ranks 31 among all 50 states in the average number of
dollars allocated per postsecondary full-time student equivalent—before any additional cuts that might occur.\textsuperscript{35}

The U.S. Census Bureau (2002) reported that 27.3 percent of area residents who are at least 25 years old have a bachelor’s degree or higher.\textsuperscript{36} With sufficient state support and region-wide teamwork by the business and higher-education communities, there is no reason that we cannot move that percent to 30 within five years and to 33+ within a decade.

Better communication between government agencies and colleges and universities would help avoid or resolve the kinds of funding issues described above, and could result even more effective higher education systems for both Missouri and Illinois. Much to its credit, Missouri’s Coordinating Board for Higher Education has made appreciable strides in opening and improving those communication channels. Nonetheless, more energy and focus are needed in this area, in both directions.

Businesses, K-12 school districts, health care, and non-profit organizations can furnish valuable additional support through seeking and sponsoring creative new partnerships with postsecondary schools and taking the initiative to expand internship and practicum programs for college and university students. RCGA, the Regional Business Council, Partners for Progress, and other civic organizations dedicated to regional prosperity are in excellent positions to conceptualize, promote, facilitate, and recognize these cooperative undertakings.
Endnotes


2. The estimate of total revenues generated directly by postsecondary schools in the St. Louis region was developed on the basis of statistical data provided by the Missouri Department of Higher Education available online at <http://www.dhe.mo.gov/statsum_0708.shtml>, with an adjustment for Fiscal 2008 figures that were not available at the time of this writing.


9. See the MDHE and IBHE Web sites.


18. Woolsey.


25. Bullard.


27. Bullard.


30. St. Louis Regional Chamber Growth Association.


32. Green; Heathfield.


34. Bezold.


About the Author

James D. Evans is the president of Lindenwood University. He joined Lindenwood's faculty as a psychology professor in 1974. He became dean of social science in 1994 and dean of the school of sciences and mathematics one year later. Dr. Evans was named dean of faculty in 1996, provost in 2000, and president in 2007. He had served on the faculties of Geneva College and Iowa State University prior to coming to Lindenwood. Dr. Evans received his Ph.D. in research psychology from Iowa State University in 1974; his M.S. in psychology from Iowa State University in 1969; and his B.S. in psychology from Geneva College in 1968.
In mid-December 2008, a group of men and women representing various professions and disciplines gathered together in the meeting room of the Landmarks Association’s office downtown. Their purpose on that gray afternoon was to discuss yet again an idea that has been chewed upon for decades, that is, how can we create effective connections between the grounds of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial and the rest of downtown St. Louis?

The memorial’s most famous feature is Eero Saarinen’s Gateway Arch. Since its completion in 1965, the Arch has become a symbol of the region, and has achieved such eminence not only for its potency as metaphor but also for its extraordinary visual majesty. This shimmering stainless steel sculpture is both a feat of engineering and artistic inspiration. It soars above a green park that is lovely, but an area that is fundamentally an island, separated from the rest of the St. Louis’s eastern urban geography.

City streets and highways create the separations. They are barriers, either actual or psychological, and they complicate intercourse between downtown and the Arch grounds. The roadways, which St. Louis writer Eddie Roth described at the December meeting so vividly as “scars,” diminish chances that visitors to St. Louis will make a visit to the Arch on foot, and, similarly, that visitors to the Arch will make their pilgrimage, pay their respects, then leave, without having set foot into downtown. All concerned, from the casual visitor to the noonday jogger to the most engaged regional participant, see this situation as counterproductive and in need of correction.

Just before the December meeting at Landmarks, former U.S. Senator John C. Danforth took a generous, $50 million offer off the regional table and voiced considerable frustration as he put his money back into his pocket. After a couple of years of investigating ways to make the Arch grounds a more dynamic attraction, including building floating islands in the Mississippi River, Sen. Danforth and his family’s Danforth Foundation offered major funding for a museum, or similar cultural facility, to be built on the grounds of the Arch. An international architectural competition, akin to the process that elicited for St. Louis the brilliance of the then-young Eero Saarinen and his Arch, would be the means for choosing the architect, who would design
the museum.

Although this plan was greeted positively by many stakeholders in the region, particularly by stakeholders in downtown St. Louis, and by institutions and individuals committed to regional development. However, the proposal encountered a less favorable reception by the National Park Service officials here, a reception best described as ambivalent. The National Park Service is a steward of national public lands, and is curator of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial. The memorial is a National Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Park Service’s opposition, founded on a belief that the integrity of the grounds, as they exist, must be protected from incursions, was sustained enough and steely enough for Sen. Danforth to remove himself and the Foundation from the Arch picture. His was an emphatic backing off, and unless there is a change in official attitude, it was unequivocal. Time will tell what will become of all this.

For all its drama and high stakes, the museum-or-not situation isn’t the focus of this article. Rather, what’s to be explored here is a narrower but a nevertheless vexing and persistent situation. And that is: why the hell is it so excruciatingly hard to get the good idea off the table, without a lot of value engineering and compromise or even death, and into action in St. Louis?

There are so many examples of this particular brand of civic stagnation here, beginning with art museum addition and ending with zygotes. The example we’ll use is one that is current, continuing and maddening. That is the Arch-downtown-connections problem discussed at the Landmarks office meeting in late 2008.

The reason I’ve chosen this particular issue, or idea, is because, there is potential in 2009 of a lively, constructive discussion arising to make productive suggestions about the connections. After all, it is a situation that is, or should be, relatively simple to mediate. It involves managing and slowing down traffic, creative engineering to remove exhaust safely from below-grade roadways that would be enclosed, landscaping and so forth.

The connections issue was chosen, also, because it slumps in its worn out chair as an example of the sort of lassitude that dulls the region. My experience has been that the good idea is perceived not as a goal but as a clay pigeon to be shot out of the sky. Once the good idea is brought forth to solve some problem or another or to make some progressive improvement or innovation, a reason is found to stall or to suffocate implementation. Lack of money gets trotted out as an excuse regularly, and certainly has been applied to this connections dilemma. It’ll costs too much! We can’t afford it! But can that really explain away the whole problem? Or is money a convenient civic skirt behind which to hide?

As recently as 2003 there was a plan for a connection between the east end of the Gateway Mall in Luther Ely Smith Park and the Arch grounds. It came out of the Downtown Now! Plan. I wrote about it for the Post-Dispatch:

“Since the infancy of the Arch project, various ways to connect downtown with the monument and its grounds have been proposed. It is work long overdue. The intersection of the lanes of Memorial Drive and Market and Chestnut streets are formidable. The curbs are high; accessibility for the disabled is lacking; traffic is aggressive if not threatening; the big openings to the below-grade highway lanes are noxious.

“As physically repelling as this is, the psychological barrier created by it is even worse. It is like an ugly wasteland, an asphalt and concrete scar between Arch and city, a zone of hostility. What is required, however, is more than simple cosmet-
ics. Prettying up, in fact, is to be feared.

“Rollin H. Stanley, [the then] director of the City’s Planning and Urban Design, promises the merely cosmetic approach is not foreseen.

“Last week, he replied with a vigorous ‘Absolutely!’ when asked if a distinguished architect would be brought in to refine the connection plans. That is very good news, because what plans have been delivered so far, while solid conceptually, are lowest common denominator design, the kind of work that stimulates no controversy because it is so safe and bland.

“At this point, the creator of the lid’s design is the local office of the giant HNTB Architects Planners Engineers firm. HNTB is one of the 10 largest architecture firms in the United States. Its plans, so far, have the generic look of the suburban office campus planning, with the obligatory fountains and sculptures and paving stones. The plan calls for covering up the holes to the depressed lanes, and would provide access for the disabled and would try to slow the treacherous traffic. The connection as shown would serve practical purposes - it would correct the perception of danger at the intersection and serve to draw tourists and their dollars from the Arch into downtown.

“Those, however, are practical problems. The more difficult issue - one that needs addressing with vision and intelligence - takes us into territory too often avoided in this region, territory perceived as perilous, elitist, challenging, expensive, modernist, sophisticated, beyond our aesthetic capacities and original rather than referential.

“The space between Walnut and Pine demands an arrangement of spaces and the providence of visual elements to establish not merely a connection or bridge or passageway between the Arch grounds and downtown, which is essentially passive or ‘pedestrian,’ but something more complex, like a marriage, a consummation of space, place and metaphor, an area of dynamism, one that is active intellectually, visually and practically.

“This is not an easy assignment. As Rollin Stanley said, the Arch is a special case, a building of international consequence. Further, it is a wonder of the modern world, astonishingly assertive in its minimalist coolness, a building and a sculpture, an engineering feat and a potent symbol.

“Approaches should aspire to be similarly consequential and similarly refined. The creation of such approaches requires the empathy and understanding and originality of an architect approaching the stature of Eero Saarinen, who won a national competition to design the Gateway Arch of the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in 1948.”

The ambition to erase the barriers between downtown and the Arch is a persistent good idea. Six years ago, it appeared to be in the works. Something should have happened by now, right? Why, after all these years, do these conditions persist? Less specifically but more to the point in this article, How can we do a much better job advancing good ideas from conceptual states to realities in the St. Louis region?

There are complex reasons for this. Some extraordinarily gifted and resourceful people are simply fed up and disaffected, and as they retreat from participation in public life, they say, some-
what facetiously, but in evident search of a reason, that we can’t do a better job because of germs in the economic and intellectual water we drink. Those germs include deficiencies such as tight-fisted conservatism, inertia, smugness, contentment with the status quo, indifference, expediency, miserliness done up as thrift, parochialism, and so on and on and on. These weary and disaffected critics say the good idea either molders here, or is compromised to the point it no longer qualifies as a good idea, but is shaved down to the point that it is merely an idea, generic, and ends up as a mediocre or bad idea.

Take charter reform. There’s a good idea for you. Look where that went – down the political drain, swept down by voters who’d been convinced by threatened politicians that charter reform not only would not be beneficial for the City of St. Louis but also would create a mayoral monarchy.

A merger of the city and the county is a good, responsible idea. Fragmentation is chaotic, and wastes time and resources, and should be a top priority on the list of situations to be fixed, because it is so directly connected to stagnation and civic ennui. But you can forget about reunification, right? What politician, city or county, would make the kind of sacrifices necessary for such a marriage to be considered, much less consummated?

Expansion of and improvements to the public transit system is a very, very good, humane, economically savvy idea. An efficient public transportation system enables people to get to work, to school, to recreation without having to own and to fuel an automobile. But the light bulb that beamed so bright over our collective civic noggin in regard to transit, a good idea that seemed so full of potential when MetroLink made its rolling debut in 1993, was shattered on Nov. 4, 2008, and crushed between the heel of reaction. No one was surprised, really. There was a sense of inevitability as the community went into the polls. The attitude? Make the region suffer because of bad management within the Bi-State Development Agency. And when it was all over, we either shook our heads or gave a weak cheer for whipping, in absentia, an arrogant executive, and we went back to whatever it was we were doing before, bucking traffic because of costly repairs to a highway that encourages suburbanization, creates pollution and provides only a temporary transit fix. Noses were cut off to spite our faces. What a shame.

Others say, with evidence to back them up, that plenty of good ideas actually do advance to implementation with something resembling integrity. Results, they say, bear direct resemblance to the original notion, to the stunningly good idea.

As this is written in early 2009, St. Louis Mayor Francis
Slay is running for re-election. He and his supporters can say with authority and credibility that a number of good, bold, dynamic ideas were implemented to great advantage as a result of efforts by the administration in power in City Hall today. The Mayor can claim good ideas not only get his attention but also action. In St. Louis County, County Executive Charles Dooley can make similar claims.

As regional citizens, all of us can look with delight on Forest Park, reborn thanks to a master plan everyone got behind in a public-private push. There’s another success story involving a good idea: Confluence Greenway. This is a thriving collaboration of municipalities, counties and states, conservation and recreation organizations and advocates, supported by private and public funds. It is thriving and has become a national model for planning and land conservation, for recreation and resource management.

“Just look around,” regional positivists say. Things are better, way better, than ten years ago—the last time this book was published. And they are right. Improvements have been made. Good ideas have become good things and good ideas have encouraged good practices. Yet if I were to interrupt your reading and ask you to look me in the eye, what would you say about our ability to generate good ideas and our success in moving them toward realization?

My guess is that your answer would reflect the ambivalence I refer to above. Things are good, or okay anyway, but then again, things are not so good, and hanging over everything is a sense that we could do better if we could figure out why we don’t do better.

That you have this book before you indicates you have more than a casual connection to this region, and that you have a concern for, or at least an interest in, its future, an interest that goes beyond your own personal well-being. You understand the quality of civitas—shared responsibility, common purpose—and furthermore, unless you are one of those corporate nomads who roam from city to city, changing jobs every three or four years, you feel some obligation to contribute to our region’s improvement and its growth in physical, economic, social and cultural terms.

My guess is, because you’re reading this book, that you are not a member of the herd that goes to work every day, or goes to the golf course or the bridge table every day, and squanders your time focused, to the exclusion of all else, on your own personal industry or amusement or recreation, only to go home and devise some further form of escape, be it cocktails or cheerful banter or
interior decorating magazines or reality shows on television.  
Because of your concern for the vitality of metropolitan St. Louis, you have your own ideas, good ideas, about what might make it better, or at a minimum, what you might help do to assure its survival.

You probably have plenty to say about the forces and attitudes that lessen the chances of progress. What obstacles do you see tripping us up on the road to progress? Race? Class consciousness? Poverty? Regional fragmentation? Business failures and losses of jobs? Risk aversion? Geriatric infrastructure? Bad public schools? Derelict neighborhoods? Transportation ills of several descriptions?

What institutions generate good ideas for the region in your view? Government? The universities? Think tanks? Mosques, synagogues and churches? Booster organizations? Online, broadcast and print media?

So what do we need to do to inaugurate a new age of standing up for the good idea? As far as I am concerned, one thing, one quality, one dynamic aspect of human personality is what is required. Leadership.

I want to define carefully what I mean by leadership. First, I mean no disrespect to the men and women of this community who come forth faithfully to provide guidance and continuity for all of us and to help to fulfill the civic compact. Their name is legion. However, in the four decades I have spent here, watching the civic spirit deflate, I am persuaded that a sense of responsibility that obtained in St. Louis in the early and mid-20th century began a slow decline that mimicked the decline that can be measured in dollars and population figures but also, less tangibly, in moxie and imagination. Efforts at improvement are all too often fragmented, and are reflections of the fragmentation of the region itself.

Leadership, like ideas, can be good, bad or in between. If we look back critically, we see a historic landscape populated by all sorts and conditions of leaders -- good, bad, mediocre, indifferent, effective, ineffective, enlightened, criminal, and so forth. And, quite naturally, you and I may disagree on whether this leader is good or that leader is terrible, simply because we, as thinking, feeling beings, drag generations of baggage in our train, the contents of which consciously and unconsciously inform ways we feel about things, and affect profoundly our decision making processes.

In general, leadership, after all, is a Cerberus-like construction, a creature of many heads. Some of these heads represent by benevolent, constructive and wise spirits. Others are vicious, destructive, greedy and stupid. Sometimes, as we have learned repeatedly, it is different to tell one from the other because they are related, growing out of the same body.

There is evidence of consistent, strong, enlightened leadership, however, leadership of the sort that can initiate a good idea, stump for it and make it a reality, sometimes in the face of what many would consider unconquerable opposition. An example? Howard F. Baer.

Howard Baer died just over a decade ago, late in December 1998. He loved to meddle in the life of the community. When I heard Howard Baer on the other end of the telephone wire, I thought, “Oh goody. A fight.”

He was enormously cultivated. He was a writer and a raconteur, and he was serious about learning. He knew Latin and Greek, and according to his friend, Ruth Jacobson, another leader of great energy and foresight, he was reading Plato, again, the summer before he died. Education, cultivation, curiosity and a nimble mind are all signs of leadership.

Mr. Baer moved to St. Louis from his native Charleston, West Virginia, and he married the late Isabel Aloe, whose family owned the medical instruments company here. The Aloes are remem-
bered for their good citizenship, and their particular legacy is the Carl Milles fountain, “The Meeting of the Waters,” directly across Market Street from Union Station.

Baer came to love St. Louis. In 1978 he wrote a book called “St. Louis to Me,” a witty, informed story distinguished not only by its observations but also by its lack of timidity. Here’s what he wrote about his love affair with the city:

"The essential comfortableness of St. Louis is what comes through as the town's chief attraction. Nor do I confuse comfort with laziness; rather the qualities of decency, respect for learning, good-nature, high good humor, respect for the other fellow together make for a good existence at this place where the rivers meet.

"There is then an aura, an ambiance about the town that almost defies analysis, but is nevertheless as real as Forest Park or City Hall. Those who live here like it, and those who come here often want to stay. When you ask them why, they speak of the slower pace, the lesser effort and strain required, perhaps, than in New York, Chicago or Los Angeles, the good education close at hand, superb medicine, vigilant newspapers, a great ethnic mix and a liberal tradition; but all of these somehow do not tell the whole story. When pressed further they are likely to say, well, it's the people -- they are great. I think so, too."

That was Baer, being accommodating and generous. At other times, Baer's personality more resembled the homophonic beast. One of his most significant fights concerned the old Busch Stadium, the mid-'60s version, designed by Edward Durell Stone.

As architecturally insipid as the new Busch Stadium is, the original plans for the mid-'60s stadium probably worse. They called for a concrete doughnut with no visible architectural grace, character or merit. Baer was appalled by the design, which was the work of and under the thumb of the engineering firm of Sverdrup & Parcel, itself the fiefdom of another civic monument, the late Gen. Leif J. Sverdrup.

Baer believed deeply in the power of art, and believed also that art conferred nobility upon a community and its citizens. This conviction brought him into direct conflict with Gen. Sverdrup, and in the midst of the conflict, an insulting encounter in the engineer's office.

In his obituary, the Post-Dispatch noted, “Mr. Baer insisted that a building as important as Busch Stadium must be visually satisfying as well as functional. Mr. Baer won the ugly disagreement with Sverdrup, whose engineering firm provided the initial design. Stone was hired to design the exterior of the building, and a more sculptural Busch Stadium was the result. Mr. Baer put up $10,000 for part of Stone's fee.”

The Baer-Stone Busch Stadium is gone, and the land on which it rested is now an undeveloped vacant lot. Although that monument to Mr. Baer (and to August Busch Jr., another formidable leader of the old school) was razed, a less material but nonetheless dynamic legacy of Baer's survives, providing steady and abundant support for a number of the region's most important cultural institutions.

“Mr. Baer frequently was enlisted to lend support or to raise money for one good cause or another,” his obituary observed. “His most important job was to persuade voters of St. Louis County to tax themselves for the support of two institutions that they had always enjoyed free, the Art Museum and the Zoo.

“In 1956, Mr. Baer was appointed to the Board of Control of the St. Louis Zoo and four years later was elected its president. His interest in the Zoo had been stimulated by his three young granddaughters, who frequently took him there on Sunday afternoons.

“He was shocked that repairs at the Zoo went unmade because of financial strictures. Since
its founding, the Zoo had been supported solely by the St. Louis property tax.

“Mr. Baer realized that with soaring costs and a sinking tax base in the city, the situation would get worse, not better. The possibility of charging admission was considered and rejected.

“In 1969, Mr. Baer formally proposed a taxing district that would encompass St. Louis and St. Louis County and support the Zoo and the Art Museum -- which had also been supported by city residents alone -- and Clayton’s privately funded Museum of Science and Natural History.”

The good time to be asking for a tax increase for a good idea is Never. Nevertheless, the proposal made its way onto the ballot when school tax increases, and many bond issues and other property tax increases, were being voted down by tax-weary citizens. Mr. Baer would not be dissuaded from his ambitions. He saw a bill through the Missouri Legislature to create the taxing the district and was standard-bearer of a campaign to sell the scheme to the voters. In April 1971, the voters of the city and county approved a $200 million revenue bond issue campaign for airport improvements. “He considered the campaign for the Zoo-Museum District far more difficult,” his obituary said. Since that initial victory, the district has expanded to include the Missouri History Museum and the Missouri Botanical Garden.

Baer’s leadership often concerned the visual arts, as he demonstrated in his fight to give St. Louis an architecturally graceful sports stadium. He and Mrs. Baer also gave pair of sculptures by Henry Moore to Lambert-St. Louis airport to welcome visitors in a way that demonstrated St. Louis to be a progressive, sophisticated city. When the sculptures were ill treated, he took them back.

He led a campaign to have a neglected monument to American Jewry cleaned up and presented more prominently in Forest Park. When a mobile sculpture by Alexander Calder was being whipped to death by the wind on the promenade deck of the Mansion House downtown, he campaigned to have it moved, and moved it was.

When the developer of the Adam’s Mark hotel proposed cladding his renovated building in a stucco-like substance, Baer energized the architectural community and the public against the scheme. He recognized the importance of the Arch to the city, and he was damned if a close neighbor were to be a building covered in some synthetic material.

When he and Mrs. Baer decided to build a house for themselves, he bucked tradition and neighborhood opposition. They commissioned a house from the modernist architect Fred-
erick Dunn and built it in stately Portland Place. For Mr. Baer, good modern art and good modern design expressed one’s time – and one’s optimism and hopes for the future.

He was a gentleman, and fit a declaration E. M. Forster gave in support of a particular notion of aristocracy in Two Cheers for Democracy. Forster said he believed in aristocracy -- “Not an aristocracy of power, based upon rank and influence, but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky. Its members are to be found in all nations and classes, and all through the ages, and there is a secret understanding between them when they meet. They represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos. Thousands of them perish in obscurity, a few are great names. They are sensitive for others as well as themselves, they are considerate without being fussy, their pluck is not swankiness but power to endure, and they can take a joke.”

Howard Baer was such a man. His leadership was a living expression of the sort of commitment to citizenship described by Forster, one based on a belief that the public good comes before individual enrichment. Although financially successful (but not obscenely so), money was not Baer’s currency, nor was power was his ambition – except when wealth and influence and connections could be used to rebuild the muscle of what he regarded as an increasingly flaccid region.

To Forster's description one must add fearless. Genuine aristocrats are a confident bunch, and Baer was not afraid to stick his neck out, when necessary, and he was persistent. He had the sort of assurance good leaders must have -- that their ideas are well considered, worthwhile, encompassing, good. While willing to compromise on details, strong leaders are loath compromise on essential principles. The idea of a good idea's being talked to death, or diminished by expediency, is anathema to them.

At the December 2008 meeting at the Landmarks Association's office -- the meeting concerned with figuring out a way to conquer inertia and to get a plan to connect the Arch to the rest of the city above which it rises – a fellow named Frederick Bonasch demonstrated he understood these fundamentals of leadership.

Bonasch is a city planner and works for the St. Louis Development Agency. What sets him apart is not only a concern for helping to fuel the forward motion of the region but also an understanding of effective operations, getting things done.

Bonasch employs a force Howard Baer never imagined, the Internet, to help him to exert leadership in the region. He moderates a blog called St. Louis Rising -- www.stlrising.blogspot.com -- a modest, independent, civic-minded site is dedicated to effecting change and the generation of, well, good ideas.

As Bonasch puts it in his blog’s mission statement, “STL Rising is a blog dedicated to the renaissance of the City of St. Louis. It's a place to discuss issues and possibilities, all in the spirit of promoting the continuing progress of this great metropolis of the Mississippi Valley.” He convened the group that came together the Saturday before Christmas. He encouraged a healthy exchange of ideas, and demonstrated an understanding of conflict management and how, harnessed properly, conflict can be channeled into productive industry.

He brought the group to agreement on several points. The most important of them just might be this important observation: You need some strong person at the helm. Certainly problems should be addressed, initially, through the free exchange of ideas and by committee action and by the application of democratic ideals. After that, however, strong visionary leadership is required. You need a pilot, and he or she has to be dedicated, informed and smart.

If there is a single prescription to cure what ails us in this region (which, at its core is our
inability to get good ideas off the mark and moving with their goodness intact, and to protect their integrity and wisdom, and to understand that, yes indeed, there are many ways to skin a cat, but it is incumbent upon us to choose one of them and get on with it) that is fresh, vigorous, uncompromising leadership.

I am a newspaper guy. I do not know a secret formula for emboldening leadership. I do know, having watched good ideas spring up and wither in the region, we need to develop and to support visionary leadership of a more robust, more visible, more assertive sort. Good leaders understand the notion of noblesse oblige, that to truly be a member of the Establishment, or a Fors-terian aristocracy, giving back must supersede getting. Enlightened leaders know working for the common good is an essential, unleg-islated organ of a functioning, dynamic, democratic respiration.

We must re-establish for ourselves a respect for intelligence, for cultivated minds, for the willingness to fight fair for the public good and to eschew personal gain. We must celebrate the sort of initiative and courage required to make money, but we must also factor in the absolute necessity to sacrifice, and rather paradoxically, learn how to reward it with contemporary laurels.

We must reestablish the notion of the rewards and values of community, of living and working together, of sharing resources, of looking to the past for inspiration as we move forward with courage, optimism and an appreciation of the value of innovation – the good idea.

We must cultivate a new Howard Baer.
Endnotes
5. Duffy, “Howard Baer, Guardian.”
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About the Author

Robert W. Duffy is associate editor of the *St. Louis Beacon*, a new online regional news publication. He began his career in the news business in 1955 when he took a job delivering the *Arkansas Gazette* in his hometown, Little Rock. He joined the staff of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* in 1973 and worked there, with one brief interruption, for 32 years. He served as reporter, critic, columnist, editorial writer and editor during his tenure at the paper, and spent time in every department of the newsroom except sports. He was a juror for the Pulitzer Prizes for photography in 1978 and '79. In addition to the *Post-Dispatch*, articles by him have appeared in national magazines such as *U.S. News and World Report, Smithsonian and Modernism*, and he has contributed essays or chapters to several books on architectural and urban-design subjects. He is a member of the faculties of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis, and is a 1967 graduate of the University’s College of Arts and Sciences. He serves on the board of the St. Louis Psychoanalytic Institute (of which he is secretary) and the advisory board of the New City School. He has two sons, both teachers. He lives with his partner, Martin Kaplan, in the Central West End of St. Louis.
WHY ST. LOUIS DOESN’T MAKE BIG DECISIONS
Les Sterman

St. Louis has a rich history of planning yet, paradoxically, we are notorious for the inability to implement plans. We develop big ideas, but too often lack the will to act on those ideas. A prominent local columnist, Bill McClellan once wrote “For us, the joy is not in doing but in planning.” Similarly, Dr. Robert Archibald, President of the Missouri Historical Society observed that “St. Louis is as well-planned as it could be…but these well-intended, often intelligent efforts have been mostly futile, mere documents lying neglected and ignored in a bottom drawer.” While it’s difficult to assess whether this history of frustration is unusual for older, complex metropolitan regions like St. Louis, it is clear that there are conditions in the St. Louis region that impose difficult obstacles to decision-making and the implementation of big plans. The purpose here is to describe some of those conditions and to suggest changes that might be necessary to support more decisive action to implement plans.

Source: East-West Gateway Council of Governments.
There is ample evidence that St. Louis indeed has trouble mobilizing to develop and execute big plans that might shape the region. There is no regional land use plan, for example, and attempts to create something that sounded like one.\textsuperscript{3} in the late 1970’s were met with suspicion and scorn, particularly by suburban counties who believed that a regional plan might restrict them from growing. There is no regional plan for housing, recreation, or open space, despite the longstanding existence of a regional planning agency, the East-West Gateway Council of Governments, which was constituted in 1965 to address such regional plans.\textsuperscript{4} Nor is there a regional economic development strategy, at least one that is broadly accepted or even acknowledged. This is despite the longtime existence of a regional economic development organization, the Regional Chamber and Growth Association (formerly the Regional Commerce and Growth Association), whose announced purpose is to serve as “the bi-state region’s lead economic development organization.”\textsuperscript{5} At the local level, comprehensive planning, while required by state law as a requisite to zoning, is not very effective, nor are such plans linked to any regional plans.

To be sure, the deficiencies in governance in St. Louis are widely recognized. A number of business and civic organizations identify “regional governance” as an important concern.\textsuperscript{6} The Peirce Report, published in 1997 and commissioned by the Regional Chamber and Growth Association, the William T. Kemper Foundation and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, reinforced this now familiar refrain that St. Louis has no regional “vision.”

There have been many attempts to develop a multifunctional regional plan in St. Louis. The most recent, while not explicitly labeled as a plan, took place in the late 1990s. In January, 1996, Andrew Craig, then Chairman of Boatmen’s Bank, was being honored as the Man of the Year in St. Louis, when he announced in his acceptance speech the launching of a major effort to bring about the renaissance of St. Louis by the centennial year of the 1904 World’s Fair. This initiative, called St. Louis 2004, was a multiyear regional visioning process led by former Senator John Danforth. This process was remarkable in scope and dedication. Hundreds of volunteers met in countless meetings on a wide variety of topics, ranging from culture to regionalism to education. Public meetings were held across the region. The volunteer committees of St. Louis 2004 produced wide-ranging and bold recommendations. St. Louis 2004 did succeed in launching a number of important projects, including the formation of the Great Rivers Greenway District to build parks and trails throughout the region, the development of a bold downtown plan called Downtown Now!, and the founding of a not-for-profit, called St. Louis for Kids, aimed at promoting quality after-school activities for young people. In the end, however, St. Louis 2004 did not succeed in realizing the “renaissance” of St. Louis or indeed the kind of transformational regional changes that were envisioned by Mr. Craig. While there are a number of legitimate reasons for this outcome, the point is that despite having great leadership, a sound well-funded approach, high expectations and wide participation, the factors that make regional change so difficult in St. Louis ultimately scuttled the big ideas.
What makes it so difficult for the St. Louis region to address important problems and make collective decisions? The answer to that question most likely begins in our geography. The St. Louis metropolitan region is one of the most politically and geographically complex in the nation. The sixteen county metropolitan statistical area includes 868 units of local government in two states. Major rivers divide the region. Some anachronistic structural divisions in government date back to Civil War era tensions between the pro-Union City of St. Louis, and the pro-Confederate state of Missouri, when the state assumed budgetary and governance responsibility for the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, an arrangement that continues today. Of equal importance to political structural divisions are less tangible, but longstanding and pernicious racial and economic divisions. This environment naturally diminishes the probability that grand plans will succeed, since consensus is hard to come by, leadership is diffused, and any one political unit, interest group, or even one well-placed elected official can exercise a veto over collective action.

### Ratio of Local Government to Citizens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kansas City</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Louisville</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Indianapolis</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cincinnati</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Oklahoma City</td>
<td>17.2</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
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Average: 12.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and East-West Gateway Council of Governments.
Why does it matter? If the St. Louis region were healthy, growing and prosperous, one could make a case that decentralized planning and decision-making processes make little difference in the region's prospects. Some argue that the multiplicity of local governments is a great demonstration of a kind of governance where government is “close to the people.” Experience suggests otherwise. Measures of regional health compiled by the East-West Gateway Council of Governments as part of its series of *Where We Stand* reports suggest that the region is falling behind its metropolitan peers in a wide variety of economic and social measures. The St. Louis region has consistently ranked near the bottom of metropolitan regions in growth in population, jobs and income. While there are a number of explanations for the region’s low standing on these measures, there seems to be little ability to mount a planned, concerted and persistent effort at regional improvement. Jerry Paytas, with the Carnegie-Mellon Center for Economic Development in Pittsburgh, concludes that “fragmented governance at the metropolitan level reduces the competitiveness of the metropolitan economy.” Paytas indicates that “Long-term competitiveness requires flexibility, and fragmented regions are less likely to mobilize the consensus for change. Fragmented regions divide the regional constituency, offering opponents of change more opportunities, forums and even institutional support to resist change.”

One likely reason for the absence of actionable regional plans is the very limited authority vested in any regional agency. The 1934 Regional Survey and Plan for the St. Louis region concluded that “The successful execution of any plan involves two prerequisites, namely, (1) legal authority to insure that the plan will be followed and the several regulations enforced, and (2), widespread citizen support.” The plan went on to say that, “It would be most desirable if the essential planning regulations could be adopted throughout the entire Region by one centralized body.” Today, the region lacks an agency to develop and enforce a meaningful regional plan, and the citizenry is often so polarized and their engagement in decision-making so limited, that even a simple and sensible plan to rationalize the collection of trash draws fierce opposition. The problem described in 1934, has, if anything, become more acute, as political and civic influence has become far more diffused.
In effect, there is no accepted “platform” from which to launch effective regional action. The authority to regulate and control critical regional functions rests with local government, primarily cities and counties. There is however, a record of success in implementing functional plans in some areas, like transportation, where regional and state agencies have a large measure of responsibility and authority granted by federal law. There are also a number of subregional agencies, such as the Great Rivers Greenway District, the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District, the Metro-East Sanitary District, the St. Louis Zoo-Museum District, among others, that have their own dedicated revenue sources and can execute plans within limited functional areas. There are other regional organizations such as the East-West Gateway Council of Governments, the Regional Chamber and Growth Association, the Bi-State Development Agency (the operator of the region’s transit system, Metro), who do not have independent funding and have very limited authority to carry out plans. While St. Louis is blessed with a large number of organizations labeled as “regional,” it is worth noting that the functions of these organizations are not linked by any regional
strategy or vision. We never really add it all up.

This informal or piecemeal style of regionalism is, in fact, the St. Louis way of doing things and has been thoroughly documented by a number of commentators.13 The sovereignty of local governments, and especially their control of planning and zoning decisions, is at the very core of governance and decision-making in St. Louis. The institutions that we claim as adequate demonstration of our commitment to regionalism are either those without significant authority (like East-West Gateway or the Greater St. Louis Economic Development Council), those that are not truly regional (like the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District or the Zoo-Museum District, both including only two out of the sixteen metropolitan counties), or those that perform vital functions (like the Bi-State Development Agency that runs the region’s transit system, Metro) but are fiscally reliant on local governments.

Our political geography contributes to a variety of conditions that inhibit regional cooperation or cripple regional decision-making:

1. *An unproductive system of taxation.* Nowhere is the corrosive effect of government fragmentation more evident than in the region’s inability to come together around a plan to create healthy economic growth. Instead of planning for the collective benefit, our system of taxation and governance rewards a competition for tax dollars – primarily sales taxes. As tax revenues have stagnated, municipalities and counties have used what they believe to be their only weapon to maintain services to their citizens -- tax expenditures such as tax increment financing, transportation development districts, and various forms of tax abatement. The often-articulated purpose of these expenditures is to attract sales taxes from outside their boundaries. This strategy has resulted in a small number of low tax/high service communities, often at the expense of their neighbors. This is not a development strategy. Rather, it is a highly localized fiscal strategy, one that is sometimes essential for the survival of smaller cities.14

The Regional Chamber and Growth Association, in a recent survey of business executives, concluded that the principal factors that attract business expansion and relocation are a well-educated workforce and quality of life.15 Yet, the prevailing tax structure, combined with diffused decision-making, causes the investment of
hundreds of millions of dollars in a strategy to attract sales tax producing businesses. This strategy has the perverse effect of diverting tax revenue from essential public services such as education, public safety and infrastructure. In other words, tax policy has the unintended effect of causing a massive public investment that is often contrary to an economic development strategy that we know will work.

2. **Lack of recognized leadership.** Without a dominant single jurisdiction, no single elected leader is likely to ascend to a place of recognized leadership in the region. The Mayor of the City of St. Louis, while a likely candidate, represents only about 10 per cent of the region’s population. The County Executive of St. Louis County, while representing the region’s largest and most economically powerful jurisdiction, is limited in the scope of his authority by the presence of 91 municipalities representing more than two-thirds of the county’s population. The result – no elected official or civic leader really speaks for St. Louis, or can present the kind of broad regional vision that would attract widespread support.

3. **Economic and racial divisions.** Significant racial divisions have long characterized St. Louis. The roots of our fragmented system of local government go back to restrictive deed covenants and efforts to restrict the residency of African-Americans through local planning and zoning actions. Race still plays a significant role in political dialogue and local decision-making. Economic and racial divisions and disparities inhibit reaching consensus on difficult planning issues.

4. **Denial.** There is seemingly overwhelming factual evidence that the St. Louis region is lagging significantly behind its peers as documented in successive editions of Where We Stand, the Peirce Report and many studies of national benchmarks. Yet, there is no evidence that this condition has risen to the level where there is a general acceptance that the region is in “crisis.” Many observers feel that the only way to mobilize the political and civic will to implement effective, transformative, plans is if there is a perception of a crisis that jeopardizes the well-being of a broad cross-section of the citizenry. It seems that it is far easier to “shoot the messenger” of bad news than to accept responsibility to develop more effective plans and strategies.

5. **Inattention by the state(s).** Especially in Missouri, state government has taken a hands-off position with respect to issues of metropolitan governance and performance of local government (with the possible exception of public education). Further, in Missouri, St. Louis has not fared well at the hands of a state government that is often described as rurally dominated and not fully convinced of the economic importance of its largest metropolitan region. To some degree, this condition is self-imposed, due to the political, geographic and racial divisions in the region’s large legislative delegation; the region speaks with many, sometimes discordant, voices at the state level.

6. **Complacency.** There is a certain willingness to accept conditions as they are, believing either they cannot be changed, or that those conditions are tolerable or even desirable. As long as substandard conditions of safety, education or infrastructure are reasonably isolated in the urban core, they are more likely to be tolerated or ignored. Local officials meet regularly
in many municipal associations and professional organizations and take comfort in the fellowship of their colleagues. But the camaraderie demonstrated in these largely social gatherings is not a substitute for real cooperation, where local interests must ultimately (if only temporarily) yield to collective good.

7. *Lack of an inspiring vision.*

“Make no small plans for they have no power to stir the soul.”
Niccolo Machiavelli

With some rare exceptions, St. Louisans and their leaders are comfortable with incremental change -- in their institutions, in their public policies, and in the landscape. The spirit of bold and confident action that led to the 1907 Plan, the building of the Gateway Arch, and even the formation of the Metropolitan Sewer District and the Zoo-Museum District, is no longer evident. Even incremental change is becoming difficult. While once there was enthusiasm and support for a bold vision of MetroLink spreading across the region, voters now routinely reject even small extensions of the system. Charter changes to modernize the outmoded governing institutions in the City of St. Louis are soundly defeated. Rather than fix a local tax system that is clearly inadequate to support the necessary functions of local government, successive fractional increases in sales taxes are the only fix that pollsters tell us the public will support. Going small is proving to be every bit as difficult as going big.

What might be done to recapture the intelligent vision so boldly expressed in the 1907 Plan? Or, more precisely, what can we do to create a political and civic environment that restores credibility to bold plans and rewards action to realize those plans. Proposed below are a few steps that might move us in that direction.

1. *Frame the problem correctly.* The problem is not necessarily how many local governments we have or how big they are. After all, many small communities provide good services at a low cost and citizens seem to be reasonably satisfied with their governments. It is about how best to make decisions that advance a regional vision, so we need to fix that way that we make decisions.

2. *Rebuild the trust of the public.* The leaders who authored the 1907 Plan believed that “they were able to speak for the citizens because they were of them.” They believed that the Plan “existed as the voice of the people.” Neither of those statements could be made honestly today by almost any set of elected or civic leaders, not because they are insincere or incapable, but because of the general erosion of public trust in government, business, and the political process. Given the nature of a changing society, of modern political discourse, and dramatic changes in communications technology, building public support for bold plans will require a dramatic rewiring of decision-making processes. People want to be engaged in important decisions and technology now makes that possible. New models of public engagement need to be developed and we need to shed ourselves of the belief that decisions can best be made solely in boardrooms and council chambers.
3. **Adopt an analytical approach to planning.** Facts do matter. Analysis and facts have become devalued as the currency of the decision-making process. Rather, we too often rely on short-term political judgments, the guidance of those with special interests, or other transient considerations to shape decisions. A good planning process brings good planning, policy, and politics together, and that requires fact-based analysis linked to effective public engagement.

4. **Adopt regional guidelines for local development.** The local governments of the St. Louis region should collaboratively develop and agree upon a set of development guidelines. Municipalities and counties should work together to establish guidelines for locally oriented projects like retail and housing. Developing a set of agreed-upon plans for locally oriented development should reduce some of the unhealthy competition between municipalities in the St. Louis region.

Consistency between levels of government is a key planning and operating principle for the region. Currently there is no consistency between county comprehensive plans and municipal planning efforts. Local planning will remain an integral part of community development, but should be consistent with county and regional planning.

5. **Fix the unproductive use of development incentives.** Undertake comprehensive reform of Tax-Increment Financing (TIF) and other economic development financing in both Missouri and Illinois. These incentives are one of the principal means that local governments have used to shape land-use, yet the resulting growth patterns are often unsustainable and economically unproductive. There should be a set of principles to guide the use of TIF and other economic development financing tools, as well as legislation and regulations to implement them.

6. **Create an institutional “platform” for planning.** Regional leaders should develop a new, or transform an existing, organization to bring together all local stakeholders to create and implement a coherent regional development strategy. Local planning is important, but it needs to be consistent with county plans, which then need to contribute to a coherent

Source: East-West Gateway Council of Governments and ETC Institute.
regional agenda. An entity that is not solely looking out for its own interests is needed to be the arbiter and provide guidance. A new organization is not necessarily needed, but at least a virtual organization or collaboration needs to be created from among existing business, government and civic leadership.

Good work has been done to develop several functional plans for the region, but little is being done to bring together these elements and the multitude of planning and development agencies to implement a comprehensive strategy. This is particularly true when looking at the counter-productive incentives given to attract retail sales tax generators that do nothing to increase the overall employment and fiscal health of the region.

7. **Establish state and other incentives for regional cooperation.** The St. Louis region should join with the Kansas City region and other metropolitan regions in Missouri and Illinois to persuade state government to create programs that increase funding to those regions that develop collaborative strategies to leverage local government resources and private dollars and decrease destructive competition. Missouri’s regions each need strategic and operational plans that emphasize regional cooperation. The state could provide new incentives and tie existing economic development incentives to promotion of collaborative, sustainable regional plans.

8. **Fix the local tax system.** The local tax system is broken. It doesn’t reliably support the provision of essential public services and sustains ever-widening fiscal disparities between communities. The current tax system has fiscalized land-use planning in our region to the point that the private sector now effectively makes many important land-use decisions, undermining any real potential for sound long-term planning for the future. There are a number of options for tax reform including increased pooling of revenues, imposing taxes on services, or rolling back property and sales taxes in favor of a regional earnings tax. Any of these strategies would reward good planning that builds value in communities, not simply tax base.

The hallmark of the 1907 Plan is that it linked many disparate elements of community into a single coherent vision. If we can reconstruct the conditions that allow good planning and big thinking to flourish again, maybe St. Louis can regain the kind of confidence shown by our forebears to once again create a great city.
Endnotes

8. Paytas, 23.
10. St. Louis Regional Planning Association.
13. See, for example, E. Terrence Jones and Don Phares, “Moving Toward Regional Governance – Incrementally, The St. Louis Case,” presentation, Government Vs Governance in Metropolitan North America: Where is It, Where is it going, St. Louis, June 2006.
18. Some of these proposals are excerpted from the report “Regional Fiscal Reform in the St. Louis Metropolitan Region,” St. Louis Metropolitan Forum in collaboration with the East-West Gateway Council of Governments, the St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association, and FOCUS St. Louis, 2007.
20. Tranel, 18.
Bibliography


About the Author

Les Sterman is the Executive Director of East-West Gateway Council of Governments. He has a B.S.C.E. in Civil Engineering and a M.S. in Urban and Environmental Studies from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY. Les worked as a transportation planning consultant and civil engineer prior to his current position with the Council. After joining East-West Gateway in May 1978 as Director of Transportation Planning, Les was appointed Executive Director in 1983.

Les is directly responsible for some of the Council’s largest and most visible projects, including conceiving and planning the MetroLink light rail system. Most recently, Les has moved East-West Gateway to reach out beyond its traditional role in the development of physical infrastructure to focus attention on important community issues like racial and economic disparity that undermine the economic prosperity of the region. He has been an active spokesman for metropolitan transportation, community development and environmental issues on the state and national level, and he has testified before several congressional committees and spoken to many national conferences on these subjects.

Les has been President of the Missouri Association of Councils of Government; Co-Chair and Founding Member of the National Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations; Member, Executive Committee, Transportation Research Board, National Academy of Sciences; and Member, Steering Committee, Surface Transportation Policy Project. He has chaired the Government Division of the United Way Campaign and has served on the boards of many local community and civic groups including St. Louis for Kids, the Jewish Federation, the Downtown Children’s Center, Downtown St. Louis, Inc. and RegionWise.

Les’ principal areas of interest are in the development of healthy, sustainable communities and metropolitan regions, and in shaping metropolitan scale public policy through the cooperative action of local governments. He has written articles for a number of local and national publications.

Les has been married to his wife Laura for 37 years, has two grown children and lives in a historic loft in downtown St. Louis.
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*Photo by: teresaprice.com*
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In 1907, St. Louis was the first city in the United States to develop a comprehensive city plan. What are the effects of 100 years of planning? Where is St. Louis headed over the next 100 years? *St. Louis Currents: The Bi-State Region after a Century of Planning* explores these questions and many more. *St. Louis Currents* features articles by many prominent researchers, historians, journalists and leaders from the St. Louis region exploring topics ranging from civic culture to the environment to neighborhood design.

*St. Louis Currents: The Bi-State Region after a Century of Planning* takes a critical look at many of the successes and failures of St. Louis in the past and issues that are currently being faced by the Gateway City. As an added bonus, the original 1907 City Plan for St. Louis is faithfully reproduced, along with its illustrations and photographs.