



Improving the health and well-being
of African Americans in St. Louis



This packet is an introduction and brief summary of information related to the strategy listed below. It is not exhaustive and is intended to be a starting point for the conversations that will take place at the Next Steps event. Your expertise and experience with this topic will help to fill in gaps and round out the conversation.

Strategy: Establish coordinating organization to advocate for development, tax, and zoning policies for inclusive, affordable housing

Group Charge: Develop an implementation plan for establishing a coordinating organization.

WHAT WE KNOW

Introduction

Segregation in St. Louis is not the product of accidental or haphazard circumstances. Rather, a complicated history of racial conflict followed by decades of redlining, restrictive covenants, and exclusionary zoning established this divide. Home ownership subsidies and federal transportation and housing policy that incentivized “white flight” to the suburbs exacerbated it. For more information on the historical factors that contributed to segregation in St. Louis, see [**Appendix A: Contributors to Segregation**](#).

The effects St. Louis’s racial divide are far-reaching. Previous publications released by *For the Sake of All* have highlighted the disparities found throughout our neighborhoods. In one zip code, 63105, the life expectancy is 85 years. In another, 63106, it’s 67 years. It is not a coincidence that the 63105 zip code, representing the City of Clayton, has a predominantly white population and the 63106 zip code, nestled in the heart of North St. Louis City, has a predominantly African American population.

Health is not the only notable disparity brought about by racial and socioeconomic segregation. These conditions create divergent outcomes throughout our region in terms of educational opportunities, access to employment, quality of life, and prevalence of crime, and have many other cultural and economic effects. These disparities and divergent outcomes have been well-documented by researchers and popular media.^{1, 2}

Analysis of the St. Louis Region

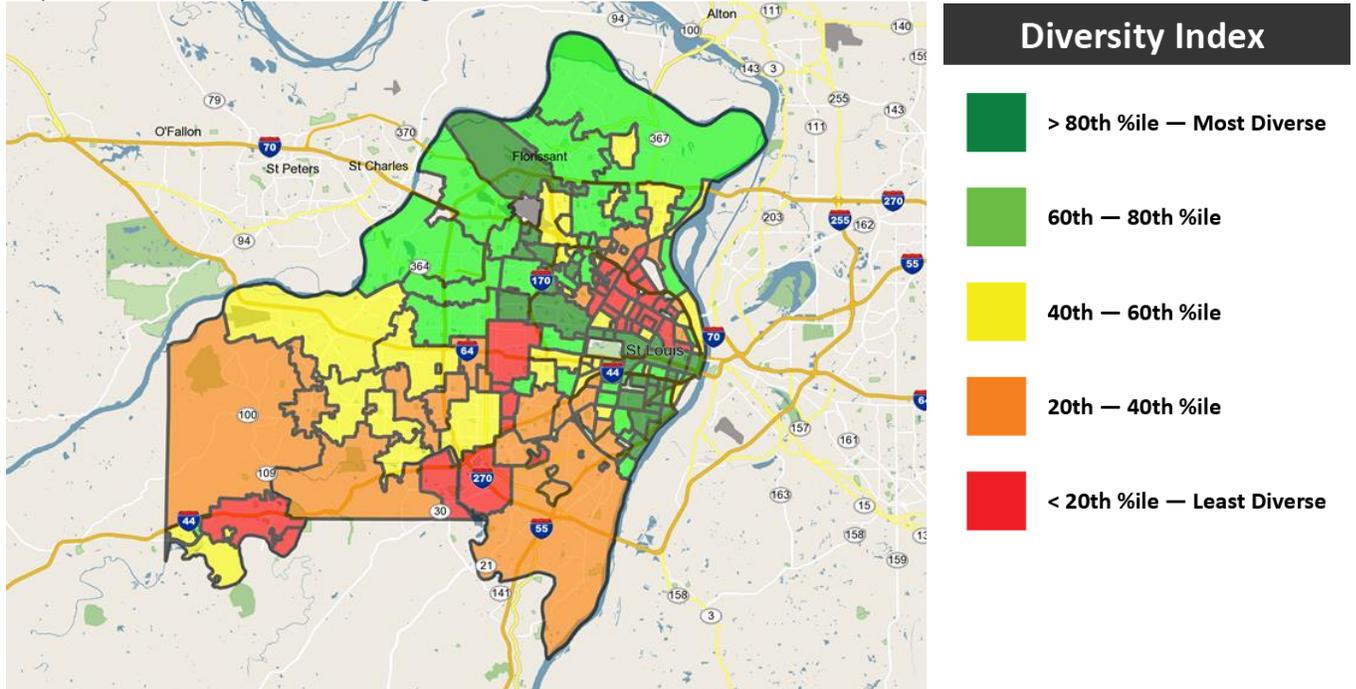
Recent studies by academics, housing advocates, and civic organizations have sought to better understand the region’s neighborhood issues. Their work has laid the foundation for actionable insights and potential remedies to employ in the St. Louis region.

The state of diversity in St. Louis neighborhoods

Map 1 helps visualize the current state of racial diversity in the St. Louis region. It separates St. Louis County and St. Louis City into its component neighborhoods and then utilizes an entropy index common to the demographic sciences³ to measure the “evenness” of integration of white and African American populations in our area.

In St. Louis County, the geographic units of analysis are municipalities and the remaining unincorporated areas; in the City of St. Louis, it is the city's 79 neighborhoods. Researchers developed the index using neighborhood residency rates of three distinct groups: whites, African Americans, and a combination of all other races as delineated by the U.S. Census. The areas in Map 1 are segmented into quintiles of roughly equal numbers, where dark green represents neighborhoods of high racial diversity, and red areas represents neighborhoods of little racial diversity.

Map 1: Racial Diversity in St. Louis Neighborhoods



Red and orange areas display interesting parallels; they represent neighborhoods where the population is predominantly white or predominantly African American, meaning there is as little diversity in municipalities such as Glendale, Oakland and Fenton as there is in neighborhoods in North St. Louis City. Information specific to each neighborhood is included in **Appendix B: Diversity and Housing in St. Louis.**

Housing in St. Louis neighborhoods

To supplement the diversity information included in this packet, researchers compiled data on family incomes and cost burdens of housing in our areas of analysis. The *Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy* (CHAS) data, information produced by a joint collaboration between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development⁴ and the U.S. Census Bureau,⁵ compiled the data to determine eligibility guidelines for HUD programs. The information can also serve as a useful barometer for the status of housing in specific areas by allowing us to see how household incomes compare with the cost of housing in areas as granular as census tracts or municipalities.

Appendix B contains a snapshot of housing costs and family incomes for all neighborhoods in St. Louis City and all municipalities in St. Louis County. Data from census tracts was converted to neighborhood-level data for the City of St. Louis.

Each profile provides graphs that visualize the interaction of two variables for both groups:

1. **Income:** Representing the median family income as calculated by HUD for the region and differentiating between families earning more or less than 80% of this amount.

2. **Housing Cost Burden:** Identifying families spending more or less than 30% of their income on housing costs.

In this way we can identify each area’s proportions of four distinct groups:

1. **Low Income / High Housing Cost Burden:** Represented by dark blue – households EARNING LESS than 80% of the region’s median family income and SPENDING MORE than 30% of their income on housing costs.
2. **Low Income / Low Housing Cost Burden:** Represented by light blue – households EARNING LESS than 80% of the region’s median family income and SPENDING LESS than 30% of their income on housing costs.
3. **Higher Income / High Housing Cost Burden:** Represented by dark red – households EARNING MORE than 80% of the region’s median family income and SPENDING MORE than 30% of their income on housing costs.
4. **Higher Income / Low Housing Cost Burden:** Represented by light red – households EARNING MORE than 80% of the region’s median family income and SPENDING LESS than 30% of their income on housing costs.

By comparing these proportions to the regional average, we can easily track regional poverty (high proportions of blue: light and dark); regionally high housing burden (high proportions of dark colors: red and blue); and regionally relative low housing burden (high proportions of light colors: red and blue).

Rebounding neighborhoods

Some neighborhoods have shown resiliency against social, economic, and environmental forces that have contributed to economic decline elsewhere. Hank Webber of Washington University and Todd Swanstrom of University of Missouri-St. Louis examined historical economic, social, and physical data of neighborhoods to create an “index of neighborhood vitality.”

They go on to feature and compare those neighborhoods that have “rebounded” over the past two decades, meaning that the neighborhood’s index of vitality score has increased after having experienced either a sharp decline or a period of stagnation in the previous three decades. They identified five in particular (Central West End, Botanical Heights, Shaw, Mark Twain and Maplewood) and pinpointed factors that contributed toward their rebound success. As seen in Chart 1, these factors were not present in all of the neighborhoods analyzed, “but a higher quality and intensity of the success factors increased the probability of success.” An excerpt of their analysis⁴ is included as **Appendix C** of this dossier.

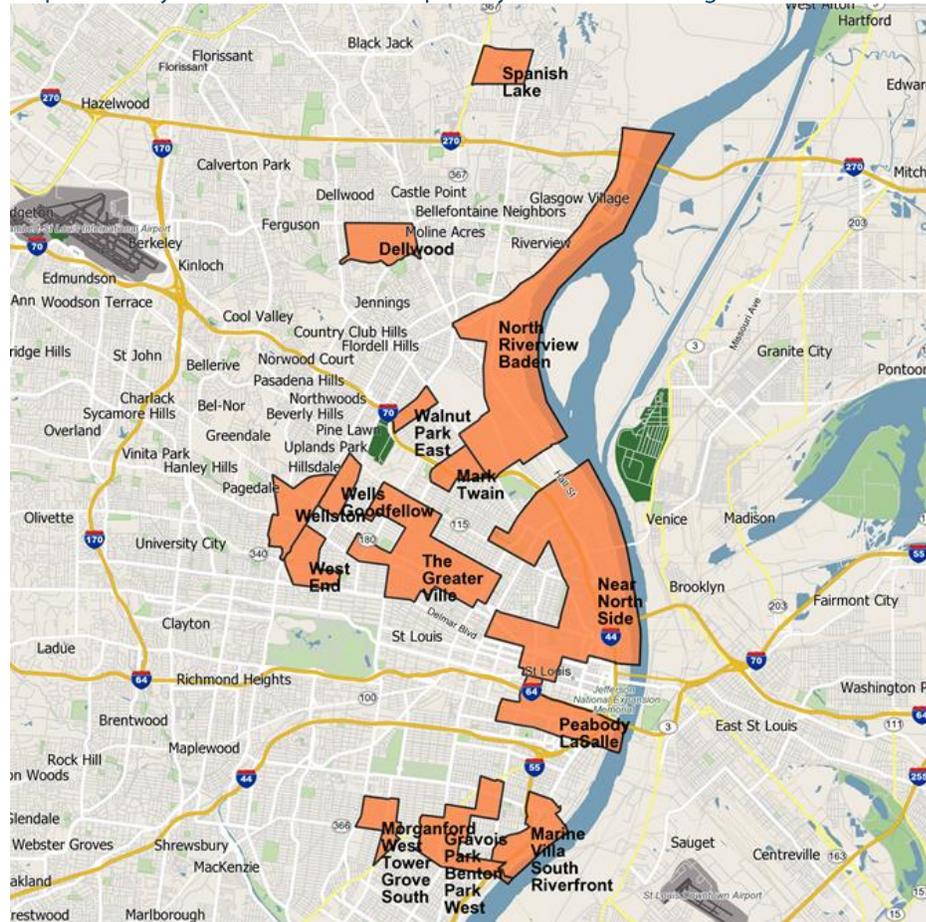
Chart 1: Neighborhood success factors

Succss Factor	Central West End	Botanical Heights	Shaw	Mark Twain	Maplewood
Strong Anchor Institutions	X	X	X	X	
Excellent Housing Stock	X		(X)		
Thoughtful Commercial Development	X				X
Thoughtful Residential Development	X	X		X	
Resident Civic Engagement	X	X	X	X	X
Good Location	X	X	X		X
Successful Public Policy	X				X
Strong Public Schools		(X)			X

OneSTL

Stakeholders in the region are aware of the challenges presented by St Louis' racial and economic segregation, and are collaborating to address them. OneSTL, a living regional plan convened by the East-West Gateway Council of Governments and developed by dozens of organizations and thousands of citizens throughout the region, seeks to provide neighborhoods and their citizens with the information and tools to help foster healthier, more inclusive communities. The documents and analyses that have contributed to the development of the regional plan are particularly insightful. For instance, the July 2013 "Fair Housing Equity Assessment"²⁵ thoroughly identifies several Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty as shown in Map 2. The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines these as areas having both a non-white majority population, and significant poverty (a family poverty rate of at least 40 percent, or a rate 300 percent of the area average—whichever is lower).

Map 2: Racially concentrated areas of poverty in the St. Louis region



The report further indexes the region according to opportunity indicators supplied by HUD, including: poverty, school proficiency, job access, labor market engagement, transit access, and environmental health hazard exposure and uses these indices to highlight Areas of Opportunity throughout the region (shown in Map 3). These neighborhoods offer a high quality of life to current and future residents. See [Appendix D: Areas of Opportunity](#) for more information.

Specifically, we need help in developing an action plan for neighborhood diversity in St. Louis. It should be a blueprint for implementing FSOA's recommendation provided below:

Establish a coordinating organization to advocate for development, tax, and zoning policies for inclusive, affordable housing.

To assist in developing the plan, we have the information and potential remedies included in this dossier as well as the expertise of our partners. The *Rebounding Neighborhoods* research offers concrete success factors, the presence of which can help revitalize neighborhoods. This coordinating organization should be able to identify neighborhoods with rebound potential and marshal the region's collective resources toward that end. The coordinating organization should also be able to capitalize on the OneSTL research—being able to advocate for fair and inclusive housing in the Areas of Opportunity identified by the *Fair Housing Equity Assessment Report* and targeting resources to Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty.

We can also learn from the experiences of Cleveland and Pittsburgh. These regions' neighborhood organizations were created by different means but they share a common purpose—to improve neighborhoods in their respective communities. Cleveland's Neighborhood Progress Inc. was created from a top-down approach while the Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group sprouted from the bottom-up as a reaction to exclusionary practices of financial institutions. While the St. Louis region needs an approach that will fit its needs, these communities' experiences can help inform our efforts toward creating an advocacy organization with a similar purpose.

We are not limited to these resources. If we need more information or broader expertise, let us know by including it as an action item of the plan. Additionally, the final product should be cognizant of the impediments to fair housing choice provided by St. Louis City and St. Louis County in their most recent reports on the subject. These reports overlapped in their concerns regarding several things, namely:

1. Limited access to resources such as jobs and quality schools
2. Lack of accessible housing for people with disabilities
3. Prejudiced attitudes and “NIMBYism” (Not In My Backyard) -- the resistance of some established residents to measures that would house protected classes in their area.

Incorporating strategies and tactics to address these issues will help make the action plan viable. A list of these impediments is provided in **Appendix E** of this packet.

Most importantly, the coordinating organization will need the capacity to convene diverse stakeholders, the patience to collaborate with organizations possessing different objectives and the ingenuity to develop and execute a plan that will address the region's complex housing and neighborhood issues.

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