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STRUCTURAL RACISM IN **ST. LOUIS** FACTS, FIGURES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING RACIAL EQUITY

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Introduction

Black residents in St. Louis are experiencing disproportionate impacts of COVID-19, income inequality, and displacement due to rising housing costs and gentrification. Approximately 33% of Black St. Louis residents live in poverty, compared with 8.4% of white residents.² These inequities reflect the consistent, patterned effects of structural racism and growing income and wealth inequalities in urban areas.

Beyond pointing out the history and impacts of structural racism in St. Louis, this city profile highlights the efforts of community activists, grassroots organizations and city government to disrupt the legacy of unjust policies and decision-making that have shaped the city. In this brief we also offer working principles for Black-centered urban racial equity. Though not intended to be a comprehensive source of information, this brief highlights key facts, figures and opportunities to advance racial equity in St. Louis.

CURE developed this brief as part of a series of city profiles on structural inequities in major cities. The briefs were originally created as part of an internal process intended to ground ourselves in local history and current efforts to achieve racial justice in cities where our client partners are located. With heightened interest in these issues, CURE is releasing these briefs as resources for organizers, nonprofit organizations, city government officials and others who are coordinating efforts to reckon with the history of racism and anti-Blackness that continues to shape city planning, economic development, housing and policing strategies. Residents most impacted by these systems are already leading the change and leading the process of reimagining St. Louis as a place where Black Lives Matter. We hope this brief serves as a useful source of information for building understanding and supporting the deep and sustained work needed to build healthy, just, and sustainable cities and communities.

The Changing Color of St. Louis

St. Louis stopped being a majority-Black city in 2018, according to Census Bureau data. The estimate of the city's Black population was 137,802 or 46.5% and the number of non-Black residents was approximately 146,672 or 47.2%. The overall population of St. Louis has been declining for decades.³ In 1960, St. Louis was the 9th largest metro area in the United States. By 2017, it had fallen to the 21st most populous metropolitan area.⁴ Significant economic changes have transformed the local economy away from manufacturing jobs and have contributed to population loss in St. Louis.

Between 2010 and 2017, the city overall lost 3.4% of its population.⁵ Included in that population decline was an increasing number of Black residents leaving the city including about 1,200 residents leaving between 2013 and 2014, 2,800 between 2014 and 2015, 3,100 between 2015 and 2016, and 4,200 between 2016 and 2017.⁶

Historically, the Delmar Divide has split the city in two. North of the divide is predominantly Black and where the housing stock has been devalued.⁷ The devaluing of properties north of the Divide is a combination of historical disinvestment in these

Structural racism refers to a system in which public policies and societal and institutional practices and norms work together to consistently produce disadvantages and inequities experienced among Black people and racially oppressed groups.

Gentrification is a profit-driven racial and class reconfiguration of urban, working-class and communities of color that have suffered from a history of disinvestment and abandonment...Gentrification is driven by private developers, landlords, businesses, and corporations, and supported by the government through policies that facilitate the process of displacement.

These policies often take the form of rezoning, subsidies, and other strategies that make development of expensive housing easier. This new housing is often designed to court new, wealthier and mostly white people moving into neighborhoods. Displacing a group of people in favor of newcomers dilutes the political power of working-class communities and communities of color by breaking up families, communities, and voting blocs. (Adapted from *Development Without Displacement by Causa Justa: Just Cause*)

neighborhoods and homes as well as continued racial bias and negative perceptions of Black residents.⁸ Homes north of the divide are valued at around \$78,000. South of the divide, homes are valued on average at \$310,000.⁹

Many long-time Black residents and families are being forced to leave St. Louis' North Side due to soaring rent prices and as younger, more affluent, college-educated whites who can afford the elevated rent prices move in. This trend is also occurring in parts of the city's Central Corridor. The Central Corridor just received a \$300 million investment from Washington University and many of the white 25- to 34-year-old professionals with college or graduate degrees are settling in the neighborhood.¹⁰

Displaced Black residents often move to suburbs of the city including Ferguson, Missouri. Many advocates have called for a regional approach to affordable housing with a need for solutions that address the housing affordability challenges throughout the region.¹¹

Poverty and Economic Inequality

The poverty rate in the St. Louis region was 11.7% in 2018. Although poverty rates have been declining overall, Black residents in the region are still more than three times as likely to be in poverty as white residents: 26.7% and 7.4% respectively.¹² Black residents of St. Louis are also more than three times more likely than white residents to live in areas of concentrated poverty, defined as living in a census tract with poverty rates greater than 40%.¹³ Twenty-one percent (21%) of unemployed residents of St. Louis are Black compared to 6% who are white.¹⁴ The average white household in St. Louis earned \$71,015, almost twice the average Black household income (\$36,338).¹⁴ According to a 2018 survey, 44% of residents north of the Delmar Divide have no internet access. South of the Delmar Dive, 20% of households have no internet access.¹⁵ Improving internet access is an important method for increasing access to employment opportunities for adults and improving educational outcomes for children.

Based on the 2018-2019 school year, the graduation rate of Black students in the St. Louis region was 83% compared to 92.7% for white students.¹⁶ Promoting high school completion can be an important anti-poverty strategy; however, increasing high school graduation rates especially for Black residents in St. Louis should be pursued along with efforts to combat racial discrimination in hiring practices and strategies that ensure fair access to employment opportunities, and livable wage jobs that offer paid sick leave.

Declining Housing Affordability, Rising Evictions

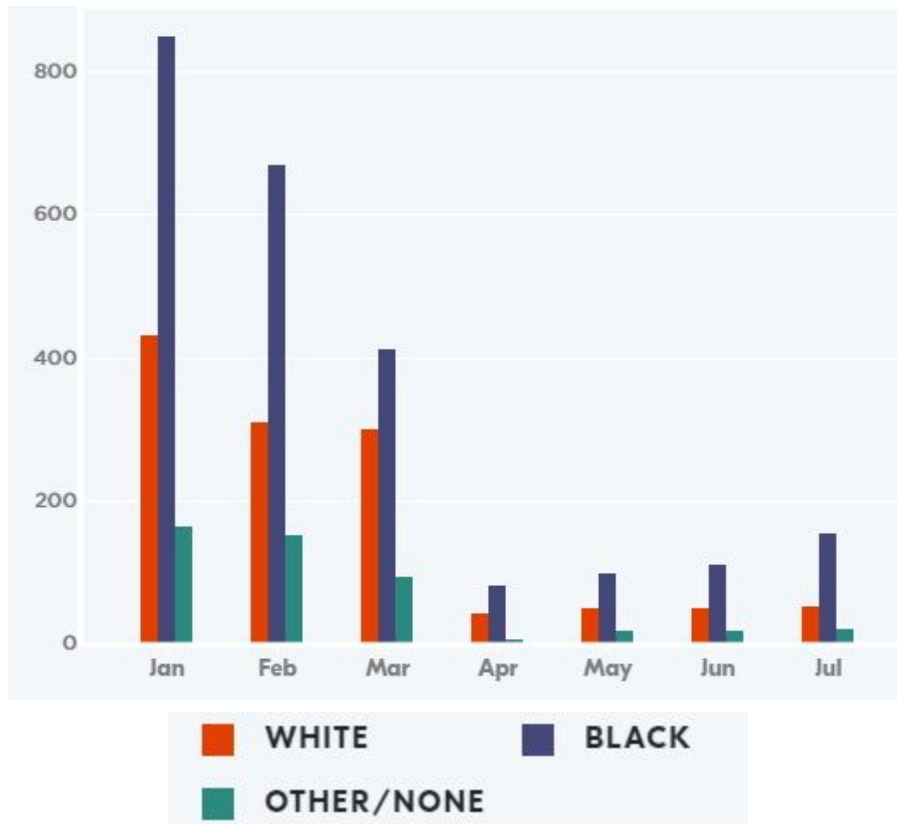
According to analysis by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the number of residents struggling with rent in St. Louis exceeds the amount of affordable housing, subsidized housing and housing

vouchers that are available.¹⁷ The number of households considered "cost-burdened" dropped nationwide from 2016 to 2017 but rose in St. Louis. Renters were cost-burdened at 23% in 2017. Almost 25% of renters were severely burdened in 2017.^{18,19} Renters of color bear the brunt of rising housing costs. The median income of renters in neighborhoods that are predominantly people of color is 24% lower than the citywide median income; yet the median rent in these neighborhoods is only 3% lower than the city-at-large median rent.²⁰

Eviction filings in St. Louis are concentrated among Black residents (Figure 1 below) and in majority-Black neighborhoods.²¹ Although rates in April through July of this year are down due to the COVID-19 evictions moratorium, Black residents continue to face evictions at a higher rate than other city residents.

The city's nuisance property ordinance has historically disproportionately affected female residents with increased threats of fines or eviction. Researchers suspect that race also plays a factor in the distribution of nuisance property ordinance eviction cases in St. Louis.^{22,23}

Figure 1: Racial Demographics of Eviction Filings in St. Louis, 2020



(Eviction Lab 2020)²⁴

In 2018 the white homeownership rate in St. Louis was 77% compared to a Black homeownership rate of 40%.²⁵ St. Louis has among the highest white and Latinx homeownership rates of anywhere in the country, but the city's Black homeownership numbers lag behind many other American cities.²⁶

Property assessment values in St. Louis are rising, with valuations increasing by more than \$3.61 billion in 2017 -- a 12% increase between 2015 and 2017. The median single-family home value, however, in the neighborhoods north of the Delmar Divide has decreased since 2007.²⁷

Historical Snapshot

Osage, Miami, Sioux, Haudenosaunee and other Indigenous groups once lived in the area now known as St. Louis.³¹ St. Louis also had numerous mounds built by Native Americans in the region. European colonization killed thousands of Native Americans and white settlers destroyed all but one mound. The remaining mound, Sugar Loaf Mound, was purchased by the Osage Nation in 2009.³² St. Louis was also a major center for the auctioning of enslaved people during the 1850s. A slave market operated on the ground that the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis now stands on and a slave pen was adjacent to modern-day's Busch Stadium.³³

In the 1840s, Dred Scott, an enslaved Black man, tried to buy his freedom. When the offer was refused he went to court to sue for his freedom. The case went to trial in 1847, but Scott lost because he was unable to prove that he and his wife Harriet were owned at all. The Missouri Supreme Court would decide that he should be granted a retrial which began in 1850. The St. Louis circuit court would side with Scott and rule that he and his wife were free. However, the Missouri Supreme Court reversed the decision of the circuit court in 1852. Scott would appeal the case to the United States Circuit Court in Missouri and the United States Supreme Court. Both courts would rule against Scott with the 1857 U. S. Supreme Court decision stating that Black people had no rights under the U.S. constitution.³⁴ In issuing his opinion, Chief Justice Roger Taney would use outright racist language, arguing that Black Americans "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."³⁵

A statewide law passed in 1847 prohibited literacy training for free and enslaved Black children. John Berry Meachum, a Black preacher, educator and entrepreneur procured a boat and equipped it with a library and classroom. He anchored the boat in the federally-protected Mississippi river where the statewide law did not apply. Meachum educated many enslaved children, teaching them to read on what became known as his *Floating Freedom School*.³⁶

In 1904, St. Louis was the country's fourth-largest city and gained international attention when it hosted the World's Fair. One of the activities of the World's Fair was viewing a group of the

Pygmy people from Central Africa. Black people were not welcome to attend the World's Fair except as menial labor or as part of the anthropological display.³⁷

In 1916, by a 3-to-1 margin, voters enacted the nation's first segregation ordinance. The ordinance dictated that no one could move to a block on which more than 75% of the residents were of another race. Although the NAACP successfully fought the ordinance in the courts, many segregated neighborhoods and all-white resident associations remained.³⁸

In the 1930s, the federal government attempted to stimulate the national economy during the Great Depression. The government subsidized and incentivized home mortgages. In order to figure out how to distribute the subsidies and incentives, the federal government hired appraisers to designate areas as "best," "still desirable," "definitely declining," or "hazardous." The areas considered hazardous were colored or outlined in red. Redlining has had long-term impacts on the health and economic status of Black residents. Today, many of the predominantly Black neighborhoods north of the Delmar Divide including The Ville were deemed hazardous and redlined in the 1930s.³⁹

In the 1900s, the white-controlled real estate market in St. Louis instituted racial restrictive covenants. This further segregated the city including forcing the area's increasing Black population north of the Delmar Divide and white residents south of the Divide. Many Black residents had to move to the suburbs including Ferguson and Kinloch.⁴⁰ In 1939, J.D. Shelley, who was Black, and his family purchased a home at 4600 Labadie



Ethel Shelley reads the May 4, 1948 St. Louis Post-Dispatch story that announced the Supreme Court decision outlawing racially restrictive covenants.³⁹

Avenue in the city's Greater Ville neighborhood.⁴¹ The Kraemers, a white couple, who lived across the street filed a lawsuit against them to block them from moving in, citing a racially restrictive covenant. While the United States Supreme Court would eventually rule that the enforcement of racially restrictive covenants violates the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, the legacy of segregation can still be felt in contemporary St. Louis.⁴²

In the early 1950s, St. Louis began construction of the Pruitt-Igoe towers. Originally, the Pruitt section was intended for Black residents and the Igoe section was intended for a white population. By the time the towers opened in 1955, whites in St. Louis and the surrounding suburbs had more housing options than Black residents. Very few white people moved in and the towers were home to an almost all Black population. The St. Louis Housing Authority's neglect and lack of investment in upkeep made living conditions difficult. In 1972, the federal government evicted all residents and demolished the 33 towers.⁴³

The City of St. Louis has a long history of government-driven displacement of Black residents. For example, in 1971, the city evicted 500 families, almost all of them Black, from the Pershing-Waterman neighborhood.⁴⁴ To build Interstate 55, the predominantly Black community of Pleasant View was destroyed. Although some of the former Pleasant View residents were given vouchers for Pruitt-Igoe, many of those recipients would later be evicted when the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex was torn down. Approximately 20,000 Black families lost their homes when large areas in the Mill Creek Valley neighborhood were seized through eminent domain. The construction of Interstate 44 removed even more Black families from their neighborhood.⁴⁵



The Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex²⁸

In 1950, Olivette, an all-white community in St. Louis County annexed a portion of the adjacent Elmwood Park community. Elmwood was a predominantly Black neighborhood that had been settled after the Civil War by laborers and formerly enslaved people.⁴⁶ In the 1950s through the 1970s, many middle-class Black families moved into the O'Fallon, Penrose, and Baden neighborhoods in north St. Louis. After the 1970s, these neighborhoods remained predominantly Black but the middle-class began to disappear. Northern parts of the city remain without middle-class jobs to this day.⁴⁷

Between the 1970s and 1990s, St. Louis installed more than 280 permanent physical closures of public streets to traffic. The number of physical barriers is more than any other city in the United States. The physical barriers or 'broken grid layout' are a product of 1970s anxieties about Black crime. Six major streets that connected areas south of the Delmar Divide to the north were cut off. Metal gates were also built on multiple streets along the Delmar Divide. The physical barriers were placed to deter Black residents from entering neighborhoods south of the Divide.⁴⁸

In 1971, St. Louis became the first American city to establish a city-run land bank. The bank, controlled by the Land Reutilization Authority (LRA) was automatically given the title of many foreclosed and distressed properties. The LRA would then resell the homes which became a major revenue source for the city. The LRA and land bank still operate today. As of 2019, the LRA owned about 12,000 properties. The properties are heavily concentrated north of the Delmar Divide.⁴⁹

Chapter 353 in Missouri is a statewide tax incentive that allows cities to declare areas blighted and use eminent domain as an attempt to encourage economic development. In the 1970s,

many businesses used Chapter 353 to invest more than \$300 million into new construction in the downtown area.⁵⁰

In the 1980s, due to economic shifts away from manufacturing, St Louis began to see a steady decline in the number of jobs available to local residents. This trend has continued to the present day. Since 1990 more than 90,000 industrial jobs have left the city.⁵¹ The closing of three auto plants alone led to the loss of more than 43,000 direct jobs and \$15 billion for the region. Historically Black neighborhoods including the Ville and Greater Ville neighborhoods have been particularly hurt by the loss of manufacturing jobs.⁵² Changes to federal monopoly and antitrust laws since the 1970s have also allowed many outside businesses to acquire St. Louis based companies and move jobs out of the city.⁵³ As a result, St. Louis has grown much slower than other cities in the Midwest. A decline in amenities and net birth rates may have also led to the region's slow economic growth.⁵⁴

Exclusionary zoning in St. Louis County has been used to prevent Black families from moving into predominantly white areas. The zoning ordinances often require single family homes on large lots and prohibit the construction of public housing, low-income and apartment buildings. In addition to exclusionary zoning, subprime mortgage lending has also impacted where Black residents can live in St. Louis and the surrounding areas. In the suburb of Ferguson, a disproportionate number of subprime mortgage loans were taken out by Black borrowers between 2004 and 2007.⁵⁵

In August 2014, Michael Brown, a Black teenager and his friend were walking down the street in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson. A police officer drove by and told them to use the sidewalk. The white police officer confronted Brown, the situation escalated, and the officer shot and killed Brown, who was unarmed.⁵⁶ The incident sparked months of local and nationwide Black Lives Matter protests over the treatment of Black people by the police. St. Louis County elected its first Black prosecutor in 2018 in response to the protests and recognition of the role of states attorneys in determining whether police officers are held accountable in police killings of Black people.⁵⁷



Eleven year-old Amarion Allen stands in front of a police line in Ferguson in August of 2015.³⁰

Areas north of the Delmar Divide continue to be targeted for redevelopment including the 2018 use of eminent domain to displace mostly Black residents to build the \$1.5 billion dollar National Geospatial Agency West Headquarters.⁵⁸ A group including the former CEO of Build-A-Bear and the Chicago-based Clayco Inc., plan to spend more than \$90 million to

redevelop an old hospital directly on the Delmar Divide.⁵⁹ The redevelopment may further intensify racial inequities in the city and especially in neighborhoods north of the Divide.

Following the 2014 killing of Micheal Brown, activists pressured local and statewide leaders to implement efforts to address racial inequities in St. Louis. This included the creation of the Ferguson Commission which proposed 189 policy recommendations to address racial inequities in the region and the subsequent Forward Through Ferguson organization which works to advance the recommendations outlined by the Commission.⁶⁰

Health Care and Health Insurance

The impacts of structural racism is evident in the health status of Black residents in St. Louis. Black babies born in St. Louis are three times as likely to die as white babies. There is a 20-year difference in life expectancy for Black St. Louisans compared to white residents.⁶¹ According to *Environmental Racism in St. Louis*, a report released by the Interdisciplinary Environmental Clinic at Washington University School of Law, major environmental and health inequities exist in St. Louis including Black children being 2.4 times more likely than white children to test positive for lead in their blood and account for more than 70 percent of children suffering from lead poisoning.⁶²

Black residents are twice as likely to be uninsured at 14% than white residents (7% without access to health insurance).⁶³ A 2014 report notes that 28% of Black St. Louis County residents lacked a usual source of health care compared to 12% of whites. Additionally, there are few primary care providers operating in predominantly Black neighborhoods.⁶⁴ The Ferguson Commission recommended Medicaid expansion as a way to address the racial inequities in the St. Louis region. In 2020, voters approved Medicaid expansion which will help more than 36,000 Black residents across the state of Missouri have better access to health care.⁶⁵

Hunger and Food Insecurity

Overall 85,400 residents in St. Louis or 26.8% of the population is food insecure.⁶⁶ St. Louis has the highest percentage of food insecurity in the state of Missouri.⁶⁷ Food insecurity is defined as the “lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.”⁶⁸ Mixed-race or all Black neighborhoods are less likely than predominantly white, higher-income communities to have access to foods that enable individuals to make healthy choices.⁶⁹ Economic inequities experienced among Black families in St. Louis increases the need for financial assistance programs such as SNAP to meet the food requirements of their families.⁷⁰ Additionally, Black residents report that it is more difficult to buy healthy food in their neighborhood (34%) than white residents (14%).⁷¹ The percentage of white residents in St. Louis County who reported that it is easy to purchase healthy food in their neighborhood is over 90%. In contrast, the

percentage of Black residents who say it is easy to purchase healthy food in their neighborhood is only 71%.⁷²

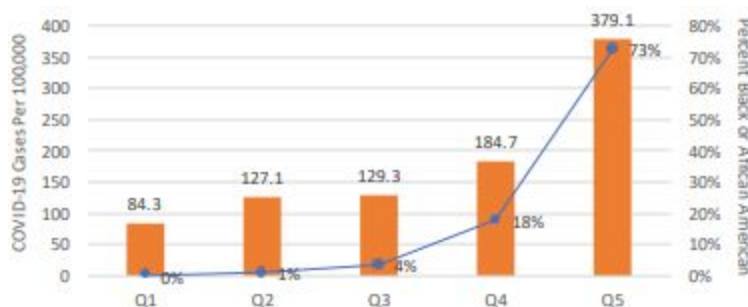
Food justice advocates in St. Louis have used the term “food apartheid” to reflect the role of systemic racism in creating inequitable food outcomes. Food apartheid in St. Louis is largely due to few food outlets such as grocery stores in majority-Black neighborhoods and racial inequities in access to cars and ease of accessing grocery stores via public transportation.⁷³

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing racial inequities and is having a devastating impact on Black communities in St. Louis and across the country. Black residents account for roughly 47 percent of the population but almost three quarters of the COVID-19 cases. Nearly everyone in the city who has died of the virus has been Black.⁷⁴

As of April 20, 2020 the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases were largely clustered in communities in North St. Louis City and County. The 19 ZIP codes with a majority Black population had a combined rate of 400 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents. Whereas the 68 ZIP codes that have less than 5% Black residents experienced 127 cases per 100,000 residents. Residents in majority Black ZIP codes accounted for 16% of the general population, but 34% of the COVID-19 cases. When compared to poverty rates and population density, race was the strongest linear predictor of confirmed COVID-19 cases. The Maplewood and Ville neighborhoods have similar population densities and are separated by only three miles geographically. Yet there was a ten-fold difference in the rate of confirmed COVID-19 cases between the two neighborhoods.⁷⁵ The graph shows that areas with larger Black populations also have larger numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases. Figure 2 below illustrates the relationship between the percentage of Black residents in a neighborhood and the number of COVID-19 cases.

Figure 2: St. Louis Black Population Quintiles by Rates of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases



(Missouri Hospital Association, 2020)⁷⁶

Essential workers in the St. Louis region are 68% more likely to be Black than non-essential workers. Additionally, essential workers are 32% more likely to be below the poverty line and 12% more likely to be uninsured than non-essential workers.⁷⁷

Criminal Justice and Police Violence

A 2018 report by the Missouri Attorney General's office revealed that although there is a relatively equal share of Black and white drivers in St. Louis, the number of Black drivers stopped by police was more than double the number of white drivers stopped.⁷⁸ Additionally, data compiled by the ACLU of Missouri showed that while Black residents comprise only 24% of St. Louis County's general population, they made up 67% of the county's jailed population.⁷⁹

In 2020, St. Louis Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner--the city's first Black top prosecutor--sued the city of St. Louis. Gardner alleges in her lawsuit that the city engaged in "a racially-motivated conspiracy to deny the civil rights of racial minorities by obstructing a government official's efforts to ensure equal justice under law." The lawsuit names city officials, the local police union, and a special prosecutor as being part of the conspiracy. Gardner has led efforts to end police misconduct, limit the incarceration of people convicted for nonviolent offenses, and rebuild trust within communities of color. Other Black female prosecutors have shared similar experiences. The Ethical Society of Police, an organization representing mostly Black police officers in St. Louis, has voiced support for Gardner's lawsuit, noting "a long history of racial discrimination."⁸⁰

St. Louis has a long history of police violence and racism toward the city's Black community. In 2019, St. Louis began an internal affairs investigation and announced that many officers will undergo sensitivity training, after 166 inflammatory social media posts made by active-duty police officers. In 2011, a white police officer tried to stop Black motorist Anthony Lamar Smith in a restaurant parking lot.⁸¹ Smith attempted to drive away from the scene and after a short car chase, police crashed their car into Smith's vehicle. Smith was then fatally shot five times through the driver's side window by former officer Jason Stockley. After Smith's murder the Stockley entered Smith's car to locate a supposed weapon and render it safe according to the police report that was filed. DNA evidence would later reveal that Stockley's DNA was the only DNA on the gun he claimed belonged to Smith.⁸²

In response to local, national and even international protests sparked by the 2020 murder of George Floyd, a Black man who died after a white Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes, local activists demanded the police department go beyond training and implement more substantial reforms. Activists including those associated with Action St. Louis, Forward Through Ferguson and Arch City Defenders released demands including immediate suspension of contract negotiations with the St. Louis Police Officers Association and a budget and hiring freeze for the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department.⁸³

The mayor, in reading written proposals from activists focused on defunding the police, decided to read all parts of the proposals including the full names and exact addresses of many activists during a live stream. She has faced calls to resign following the June 2020 incident.⁸⁴

Homelessness

Black residents often face significant socioeconomic barriers and a failure of safety support structures that force them into homelessness in St. Louis.⁸⁵ Black residents are nearly four times as likely to be homeless as white residents.⁸⁶

There is reason to be concerned that housing services for those facing homelessness and domestic violence are being cut at a time when the housing affordability crisis, COVID-19 and other social pressures are increasing the need for these services. The number of people reporting experiences of domestic violence increased 193% in the city from 2014 to 2018 while at the same time Emergency Shelters decreased by 9% and Transitional Housing decreased by 48%.⁸⁷

The Path Forward: Promising Policies and Strategies

Racial equity and justice advocates are building upon St. Louis' history of Black organizing, and grassroots activism. As in many cities across the country, there's a powerful movement afoot to dismantle structural racism and resist the forces of inequitable urban development. This movement seeks housing and tenants' rights, community-led urban development, jobs that pay a livable wage, and reallocation of funds from police to services and programs that support health, safety and sustainability in Black communities.

Housing Justice

Housing justice has emerged as an important concern in the city. In 2020, the mayor increased the Affordable Housing Commission's Affordable Housing Trust Fund funding to more than \$6 million. The fund has awarded grants and loans to 54 programs and developments.⁸⁸

Although the more than \$6 million represents an increase in funding, groups including the Equal Housing and Opportunity Council have advocated for at least \$10M.⁸⁹

In recent years, several organizations have facilitated community dialogues to identify strategies to address housing inequities highlighted in this brief. In 2019, for example, the St. Louis Association of Community Organizations, City of St. Louis Civil Rights Enforcement Agency, Community Innovation and Action Center, and Creating Whole Communities partnered to conduct a series of community conversations around gentrification and strategies for inclusive growth.⁹⁰ Launched in 2016, the Neighborhoods United for Change program facilitates conversations between neighbors from north and south of the Delmar Divide and helps to foster immersive experiences in other residents neighborhoods.⁹¹ In 2017, the Federal Deposit

Insurance Corporation (FDIC) organized discussions in St. Louis about mortgage lending in historically redlined neighborhoods and would launch the Gateway Neighborhood Mortgage program which is a multi-racial, multi-sector collaboration to end vacancy in St. Louis' historically redlined neighborhoods.⁹²

In April 2018 Health Equity Works and the Washington University in St. Louis released a report with recommendations on how to improve health equity in the city. The two organizations called for an end of housing discrimination based on source of income and unfair local nuisance ordinances in St. Louis County. Additionally, they recommended creation of a Tenant Bill of Rights, establishment of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund for St. Louis County, more affordable housing options, and policies that require a given share of new construction to be affordable for people with low-to-moderate incomes.⁹³

In 2020, the STL Housing Defense Collective released demands for the St. Louis city council. The demands included a mandatory mediation program for landlords and tenants, rental assistance for families with children, moving funding away from policing and corrections, an end to the removal and displacement of homeless residents, and a 120-day extension on the eviction and utility moratoriums put in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹⁴

Health Equity

The Deaconess Foundation, Forward Through Ferguson and the Missouri Foundation have established a fund in 2020 for healing community trauma and changing the conditions that reinforce systemic racism. More than \$1.4 million from this fund has already been put forth to support the racial justice efforts in St. Louis.⁹⁵

The Inclusion Institute for Healthcare trains leaders in healthcare on issues of diversity, cultural competency, and health literacy.⁹⁶ In order to address racial inequities in access to health insurance, the Missouri Department of Social Services partnered with the St. Louis Regional Health Commission to fund Gateway to Better Health, a program to provide uninsured adults a bridge in care until they are able to enroll in health insurance coverage options available through the Affordable Care Act.⁹⁷ Additionally, PrepareSTL was launched in mid-March 2020 to help educate underserved communities about COVID-19 and offer resources and assistance for residents.⁹⁸

In response to the limited outlets for healthy foods in the city's lower-income neighborhoods, several organizations are working to fill this gap. The City Greens Market in the Forest Park neighborhood sells produce to low-income families at wholesale prices. Gateway Greening, Urban Harvest, and Good Life Growing all focus on providing healthy food options to lower income communities. Urban Harvest also operates the MetroMarket, a refurbished city bus with healthy options that services high need communities especially in St. Louis neighborhoods north of the Delmar Divide.⁹⁹

Criminal Justice

In 2020, the St. Louis Board of Aldermen passed a bill to close the city's medium security jail, also known as the Workhouse. The Workhouse was known for inhumane conditions including poor medical care and mouse infestations. Closing the Workhouse has been pushed by Action St. Louis and the Arch City Defenders among other organizing groups since 2018.¹⁰⁰

Racial Equity Monitoring Projects

The St. Louis Equity Indicators Project uses a scoring methodology developed by the City University of New York. The tool measures the inequities faced by disadvantaged groups across multiple domains. The project is a regional collaboration between the City of St. Louis, Forward Through Ferguson, and the United Way.¹⁰¹ Similarly the Regional Equity Indicators Dashboard was created as a response to the Ferguson Commission's Signature Calls to Action. It is an expansion of the City of St. Louis's Equity Indicators Baseline Report released in late 2018. The dashboard consists of 72 indicators organized into three main themes: Youth at the Center, Opportunity to Thrive, and Justice for All.¹⁰² These projects are used to track progress towards addressing racial inequities in the region. Efforts can be made to change and amend policies based on the outcomes they are producing.

Working Principles for Black-Centered Urban Racial Equity

There is still much work to be done to dismantle the legacy of structural racism in St. Louis. This includes confronting the legacy of anti-Black racism and the role it has played in shaping the city. It also requires sustained and targeted investment in Black residents, communities, organizations, businesses and institutions. Critical to fostering the condition for racial equity in the city is ending the over-policing and treatment of Black residents as criminals, while reimagining what's needed to achieve public safety and community wellness.

- **Confront anti-Black racism** and continually interrogate the role it plays in shaping every aspect of urban life including city and regional planning, neighborhood boundaries, exposure to environmental hazards and access to health care, jobs, transportation, healthy food options, parks and recreational facilities.
- **Prevent gentrification and displacement** by rejecting hypergrowth market-oriented "creative class" city planning strategies. Embrace resident-led community development practices, racial equity impact assessments and equitable development strategies that create and preserve affordable housing and promote community wealth-building and ownership.
- **Defund policing** by reimagining what is needed for public safety and ending the over policing and criminalizing of Black people. Participatory budgeting can be used to

reallocate funds to support housing, health care, workforce development, jobs and social services that foster safety, economic security and community wellness.

- **Listen to and invest in local Black-led organizations, businesses and institutions** already engaged in efforts to foster racially equitable policies, systems, neighborhoods and communities. Shift power by practicing equitable partnerships and grantmaking that center on trust, mutual accountability, transparency and respect for the wisdom, experience, and skills present in Black communities.
- **Think and plan intersectionally** by developing an analysis of how race intersects with class, gender, sexuality, immigration status and ability. Understanding the ways that various forms of exclusion work together to increase vulnerability contributes to a fuller analysis of racial inequities and better targeted strategies to address them.
- **Commit to sustained and targeted investment in community economic development** strategies that support well-paying jobs, quality, affordable housing and educational and entrepreneurship opportunities for Black residents.

Community organizers, city governments, philanthropic organizations and businesses can leverage this moment to amplify calls for policies, programs, and systemic changes that aim to dismantle structural racism and create the conditions for racial equity. Local governments must fully honor these demands by listening to and working in partnership with residents to develop, fund and implement policies and strategies that build and support a vision for a racially equitable city.

Resources and Community-Based Organizations

- [Action St. Louis](#) is a grassroots racial justice organization that seeks to build political power for Black communities in the St. Louis region.
- [ArchCity Defenders](#) is a holistic legal advocacy organization that combats the criminalization of poverty and state violence, especially in communities of color.
- [Ascend STL](#) provides families with opportunities and resources to connect with quality housing in communities of their choice
- [Coalition Against Police Crimes and & Repression](#) works to end police crimes and abuse, end the criminalization of a generation and expose the prison industrial complex.
- [Equitable St. Louis](#) works to empower residents to drive racially equitable development in the St. Louis region through Community Benefits Agreements that are community-based, legally binding, and enforceable by the community.
- [Employment Connection](#) breaks down barriers to self-sufficiency for individuals with limited opportunities including the homeless, ex-offenders, U.S. veterans, high school dropouts, women on welfare, and at-risk youth.

- [Organization for Black Struggle](#) is building a movement that fights for political empowerment, economic justice and the cultural dignity of the African-American community, especially the Black working class.
- [Missouri Jobs With Justice](#) works to build transformative power for social, racial, and economic justice in the state.

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