THE VEERING PATH OF PROGRESS: POLITICS, RACE, AND CONSENSUS IN THE NORTH ST. LOUIS MARK TWAIN EXPRESSWAY FIGHT, 1950-1956

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POLITICS, RACE, AND CONSENSUS IN THE NORTH ST. LOUIS
MARK TWAIN EXPRESSWAY FIGHT, 1950-1956

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In candidacy for the degree of Master of Arts

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor Matt Foulkes, Department of Geography

For Mom and Dad

and

Kit and Kat

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My fascination with North St. Louis and the Mark Twain Expressway began ten years ago as a freshman at Saint Louis University. During that time I came to truly love St. Louis and marvel at its frayed-around-the-edges beauty. Nowhere was that type of beauty more apparent than in North St. Louis. From my first drive back to my hometown of Elsberry on Interstate 70 and my subsequent first trip to Crown Candy Kitchen, I felt the need to understand the "whys" of that particular part of the city. To me, it seemed so broken, but I could see clues that alluded to its former glory. I have always felt that that stretch of highway came somewhere in between those two points in the story of North St. Louis. Hopefully, this thesis fills sheds some light on how the Mark Twain Expressway came to be, and provides a window (if only a small one) on what life was once like there. Few events in my life have shaped its direction, at least intellectually, than that first trip through North St. Louis.

The completion of this thesis has been a long journey, one that has faced many ups and downs over the course of nearly three years, but it is better for it. There are so many people that deserve thanks, whether it was allowing my express my excitement over the subject or vent my frustrations about its difficulty. I owe them so much. I have found there this much patience and understanding in this world, and I am lucky enough to have many so good friends and colleagues in my circle.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS……ii

LIST OF FIGURES……...……...viii

INTRODUCTION…….…..1

CHAPTER

1. Before the Expressway:
   St. Louis, the North Side, and the Seeds of Division to 1950……..27

   Development from First Settlement to the Early Twentieth Century:
   Growth, Divisions, and Planning…….…..27

   St. Louis at Mid-Century and the Origins of Expressway Planning……..41

   North St. Louis Neighborhoods: Fragmentation and Complexity…..…...61

2. Beneath the Expressway:
   The Racial Subtext of Expressway Planning and Protest in St. Louis….……80

   Neighborhood Associations, Parishes, and Race in Early Twentieth
   Century St. Louis…….……...…...84

   Downtown Leaders, Suburbanization, Expressways, and Race…..……104

3. Surrounding the Expressway:
   Business, Politics, and Civic Disconnection in the Mark Twain Expressway
   Fight…….....123

   Expansion of Industry and Urban Redevelopment in the Debate……125

   North St. Louis Versus ‘Downtown Interests’…….134

   Mayor Tucker and the Future of St. Louis……...155

4. Making the Expressway:
   Civic Improvement and the Last Days of Protest on the North Side…….171

   A New Proposal and a Continued Fight..……172

   Tucker, Expressway Engineers, and the Fight to Early 1955..……187

The Bond Issue of 1955 and the End of the Mark Twain Expressway Fight……...…..206

EPILOGUE

After the Expressway:
St. Louis and the North Side into the Twenty-first Century……218

APPENDIX

Other Expressways:
The Region-wide Divisiveness of Expressways and Rhetoric……241

BIBLIOGRAPHY……251

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

Int. 1: Map, the North Side Study Area, Present Day…….....4

1.1: Chart, Major Occupational Categories in St. Louis City, 1950……..43

1.2: Map, St. Louis City and County Population Change, 1930-1940……..44

1.3: Graph, Populations of St. Louis City and St. Louis County (Excluding City), 1830-1950…….……46

1.4: Chart, Population Growth of St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and Largest Metropolitan Cities, 1940-1950…….……...47

1.5: Artist's Rendering of Expressways (Elliott Plan)...……56

1.6: Map, Expressways Link Downtown to St. Louis County (Elliott Plan)..……...57

1.7: Chart, Estimated Cost of Alternates of Mark Twain Expressway (Elliott Plan)..…..59

1.8: Map, Desire Lines Used for Determining Expressway Route (Elliott Plan)……..60

1.9: Map, City of St. Louis and the North Side, 1950s…….....64

1.10: Map, North Side Wards……78

2.1: Notice of United Welfare Association……89

2.2: Spatial Boundaries of Black Settlement Set by Segregation Ordinance……92

2.3: Map, Obsolete and Blighted Districts in St. Louis, 1947…….106

2.4: Map, Metropolitan St. Louis Residential Security Map Produced by the Home Owners Loan Corporation, 1937...……113

2.5: Map, Elliott Route Separates Walnut Park and Industrial Area……...119

2.6: Map, Elliott Route Separates Census Tracts of Differing Racial Composition, Early 1950s……...……120

3.1-2: Maps, Proposed Expressways, 1944 and 1947...……...127

3.3: Map, City Plan Commission Designations of Neighborhoods and Industrial Areas…….129

3.4: Map, Proposed Pilot Areas for Redevelopment with Proposed Expressways……..133

3.5: Map, North Side Defined by the North St. Louis Business Men's Association, 1926……...139

3.6-7: Political Advertisements Expressing Anti-Expressway Rhetoric and Opposition to Downtown Interests…….151

3.8: Table, Civic Progress Membership, Early 1950s…….165

4.1: Map, North St. Louis Census Tracts and New Compromise Route…….176

4.2-3: Before and After Photographs Showing Rehabilitation Results in Hyde Park….183

4.4: Table, Engineer's Estimate of Number of Houses That Would Be Demolished by Compromise Route in Northwest St. Louis by Type and Location…….202

4.5: Table, Engineers's Estimation of Number of Houses That Would Be Demolished by River Route in Northern St. Louis by Type and Location……...202

4.6: Table, 1955 Bond Proposals…….207

4.7: Photograph, Mayor Raymond Conferring with Sidney Maestre About the Bond....209

Ep.1: Graph, Populations of St. Louis City and St. Louis County, 1950-2000...……227

Ep.2: Map, Proposed North-South Distributor, or Route 755, late 1970s……...238

App. 1: South Side Protest Flier Concerning Ozark Expressway, mid 1950s…….243

Introduction

Today, while driving along the multi-lane Interstate 70 through the northern section of the city of St. Louis, one cannot help but notice a few dramatic twists and turns of the road that require the driver to take caution and slow down. Most drivers may not even consider how the ubiquitous road came to be, rarely imagining a time when it did not exist. If one did ponder that question, one might logically suppose that the road did not follow the typical straight path taken by most of America's nearly 47,000-mile Interstate Highway System simply because geographical impediments—such as the immense cemeteries to the north and the spacious park to the south—stood in the way, if they even think about it at all. Most drivers—in fact, most St. Louisans—do not know that the road, as it was originally designed, followed a different path.

Driving through North St. Louis on Interstate 70 today, one can also take a remarkably succinct visual trip through the life of an old American city. The massive stretch of concrete traffic lanes, at points eight in number, allows the driver to leave the stadiums and skyscraper-lined streets of downtown and quickly retreat to one's destination, miles away. Along the way, different stages of growth and decline are visible. Just after a sign designating the road the Mark McGuire Highway, in honor of the former St. Louis Cardinals baseball star, old industrial complexes, railroad tracks, and warehouses appear to the right. To the left, the remains of an aging, neglected, and decaying—though architecturally significant—housing stock, much of it over one hundred years old, are visible for the first mile. The driver may notice abandoned brick warehouses, many with broken or boarded up windows, and what's left of stark low- and

high-rise housing projects, some of which still serve low-income populations. There are houses too: beautiful brick structures, usually two or three stories tall, that look like few homes built today. Some are in good shape, having been rehabilitated recently, but many others are in various states of disrepair. Of all the things a driver might notice upon leaving downtown, little stands out more than lot after lot of empty space lining empty streets. All these clues suggest that there was once something here…something substantial that has nearly vanished to history.

Further up the road the driver may notice a slightly more abundant, though still generally decaying housing supply that consists almost entirely of red brick. Enormous churches reach above the houses, dominating the skyline. Their sheer size and number suggest that once they had served a substantial number of people. Two beautiful but worn historic water towers appear amid the tree cover. Faded advertisements painted on the sides of buildings for companies and consumer products long gone suggest an active economic climate once existed there. To the right, the enormity of the low-lying North Side industrial area containing truck depots and smokestacks is more apparent. It's a varied landscape that leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Then comes a clue in disguise: a dramatic curve just after the Grand Boulevard intersection.

Most cars slow down—but many do not—as the unexpected swerve of the interstate reminds them that this highway is not as straight as it had appeared just minutes before. The scenery changes quickly. To the left Bissell Mansion, the hills of O'Fallon Park, and a slightly newer, but still mostly brick and aging, housing stock are visible. Across a built-up valley of old homes to the right, one can faintly see the ornate obelisks and tombstones of Calvary and Bellefontaine Cemeteries, but twists of the highway do

not safely allow for a long gaze. Then at the immediate appearance of huge grain elevators, the highway veers back in the other direction.

The landscape continues to change and a more recent era of the city's past becomes visible. A stark, concrete, and seemingly endless industrial area is now located to the left. The bulk of residential neighborhoods are now mostly on the right, and are newer than those that surrounded the highway earlier in the trip. There are still many brick structures, but they appear to be small single family bungalows, while closely packed tiny frame houses conforming to popular architecture of another era begin to appear more frequently. All the while, traffic moves relatively quickly, leaving the driver only to wonder—or just as likely, forget—about the communities he or she bypasses.

Soon, just after a huge empty lot that once housed the St. Louis Ordinance Plant, one can notice a slight increase in green space accompanied by signs welcoming the driver to the St. Louis County municipality of Northwoods, while other signs direct the driver to the suburban enclave of Jennings. The highway continues ahead, seemingly endless, and the landscape continues to change gradually, but the view from this portion of the expressway is starkly different than that of the old urban landscape of North St. Louis the driver has passed. To the west, newer towns lining the ever-busier stretch of Interstate 70 seem healthy, active, and economically alive with chain restaurants, big box stores, and strip malls. Back in the city, after fifty years of witnessing its residents move to those areas, North St. Louis is alive in some respects and certainly variable from neighborhood to neighborhood. The drive, however, makes it clear: the North Side today resembles only a shell of its former self.

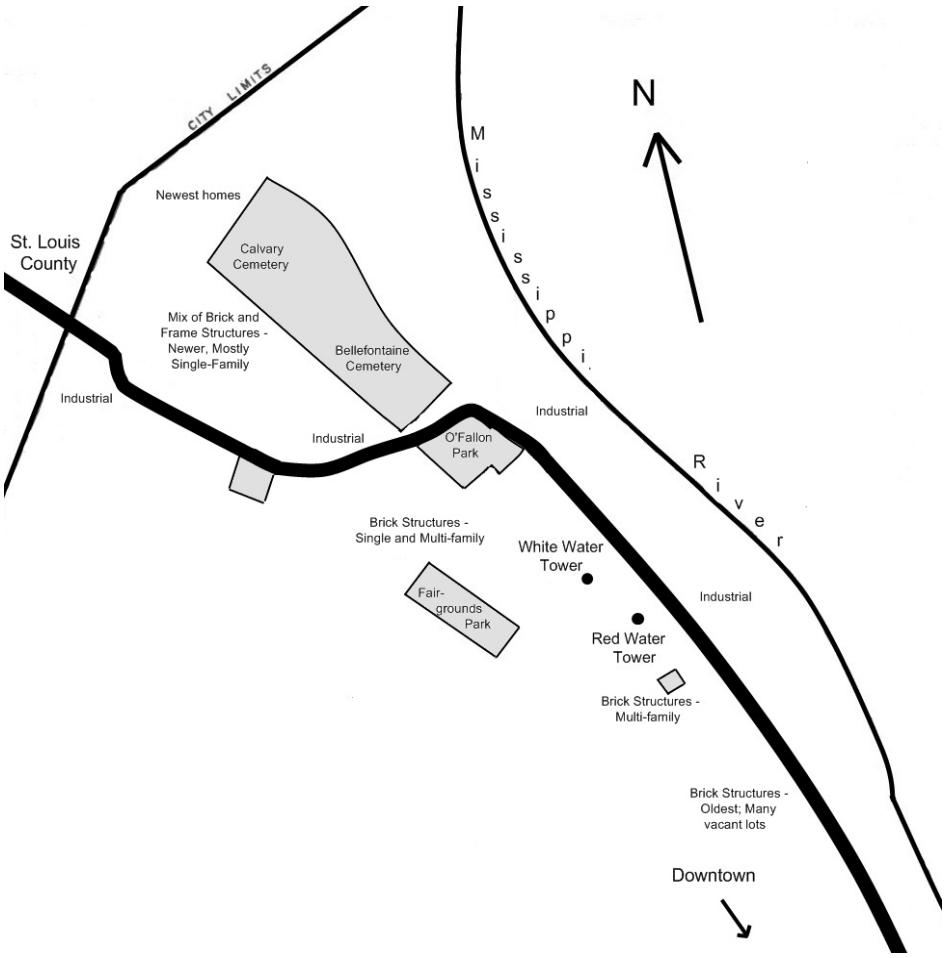

Figure 1: The North Side Study Area. Approximate location of Interstate 70 (Mark Twain Expressway) denoted by heavy black line. Map by author.

How did this happen? The answers defy simple explanations. The complexities that led to the current situation cannot be pinned on one event, but a useful, symbolic dividing line can be drawn beginning in the mid-1950s, and it runs from downtown St. Louis, through the decaying North Side, out to the suburbs. North Side neighborhoods have seen better days, and those days were before the expressway.

The story of how that stretch of Interstate 70, originally named the Mark Twain Expressway, came to take the path it did is key to understanding the landscape of North St. Louis today. The actual planning and construction of the highway on the local level is

extremely important, but the larger context is too influential to ignore. In this case, it was a growing local and national consensus concerning cities, planning, and American politics and society. Consensus has the power to dramatically shape our world in unexpected and invisible ways. While thousands of different individual choices and motivations, both explicit and implicit, certainly shape outcomes, the larger political framework dictated by world and national events can determine the direction of the discourse and limit the number of possible choices and results. When paired with political and financial power on the local level, that type of framework can all but guarantee which visions are implemented and which are not. It can even sway the direction of events already deeply influenced by engrained historical circumstances.

It was in this type of consensus climate that expressways were proposed and built in every large city in the United States in the 1950s. First widely proposed in some form as early as the 1910s and 1920s as a grand solution to urban traffic problems,[1] expressways in the 1950s represented the meeting of local economics, society, and politics, all shaped by historical circumstances unique to each city and region, with the emergence of a nationwide consensus. By helping guarantee the construction of expressways and determining their exact routing through cities, the actions and decisions made within that consensus framework helped dramatically change U.S. cities from dense, downtown-focused centers of population and power to fragmented, sprawled mixes consisting of growing suburbs and declining inner urban cores. In St. Louis, that consensus helped expressway proponents sway the delicate traditional balance of power in local politics and society in their favor.

[1] Robert M. Fogelson, *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 272-273.

Consensus describes the postwar era in different ways. In an inclusive sense, it refers to the entire American political culture of the era. Immediately following the end of World War II, as historian William H. Chafe notes, a nationwide "liberal consensus" was characterized by an overwhelming "confidence in capitalism as an economic system, belief in the efficacy of reform, distaste for and disapproval of 'class' conflict, and dedication to social unity at home as a means of fighting communism."[2] It included an active foreign policy that advocated U.S. economic interests throughout the world. This paradigm, which held that "the astonishing economic success of the postwar period eliminated the need to consider issues of fundamental redistribution of wealth, since an ever-expanding economic pie meant that even America's poorest citizens would eventually gain access to the benefits of capitalism,"[3] permeated all levels of U.S. society and culture, from the federal government to the individual household.

Amid this consensus, many Americans placed high value on the advice of experts, as was witnessed during the height of progressivism in the early twentieth century. Technological breakthroughs in nuclear physics, aerospace, chemicals, electronics, and computers led to innovations in systems analysis, microeconomics, and chemical engineering in the postwar era.[4] As home to McDonnell Aircraft, the St. Louis region served as a hub of this development. Furthermore, according to cultural historian Elaine Taylor May, "expertise offered a distinctly apolitical means of solving problems that were often the result of larger societal restraints [and] . . . reinforced the political

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[2] William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II, Third Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 185.

[3] Ibid., 185-186.

[4] Ibid., 113-114.

consensus by pointing to individual weaknesses, rather than to structural or institutional flaws, as the sources of problems."[5]

This was due, in part, to the deep anxieties that characterized post-World War II America and helped ensure the durability of the consensus, with its faith in expertise, for over two decades. The short-lived fear of a postwar depression, of which the longer postwar housing crisis seemed unsettling proof, provided one source of uncertainty. Demand for housing was so great that major cities such as St. Louis could not meet it. As the major centers of population, urban areas were struck the hardest. Also, the destructive force of the atomic bomb, witnessed by decimations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, increasingly led many Americans to fear the same fate as the U.S.-Soviet arms race commenced and provided a new source of anxiety.[6]

Experts could provide comforting answers in times of uncertainty, and thus strengthen the status quo.[7] To question the experts was to question the consensus, and questioning the consensus cast doubt on the nation's system of capitalism and free enterprise. This questioning, it was widely believed, could lead to the tyranny of communism from within the nation's borders. Individual Americans, in this case, could undermine the health and well-being of the entire community.

These omnipresent anxieties fueled an overwhelming adherence to conformity across the nation. Rather than attack the institutions of the U.S., most white Americans

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[5] Elaine Taylor May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 167.

[6] Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 5, 81.

[7] May, *Homeward Bound*, 22.

"tried to change themselves to fit into" the consensus.[8] This social trend was characterized by Americans' move in great numbers toward the security of easily containable nuclear families, reinforcing a widespread embrace of single-family detached housing in the suburbs. The growth of the suburbs and the baby boom reflected Americans' concurrent move away from extended kinship networks in old neighborhoods and their search for stability and happiness in distinct gender roles, child rearing, and homeownership.[9] Suburbia itself "would serve as a bulwark against communism and class conflict [because many believed] it offered a piece of the American dream for everyone."[10] Still, as Chafe points out, the irony of suburbia was that "those who left the city in order to find a private home of their own sometimes became enmeshed in a form of group living that crushed privacy and undermined individualism."[11]

The 1950s, despite the anxieties of the Cold War, were simultaneously characterized by a sense of national optimism. The nation had survived the depression of the 1930s and the most destructive war in history, and now Americans were looking forward to the good life. Some of the same expressions of comfort as the result of anxiety became symbols of a better future. Consumer goods, for instance, promised an easier life for all. The economic might of the United States was unmatched throughout the 1950s and 1960s, giving American workers previously unheard of levels of discretionary

[8] May, *Homeward Bound*, 167.

[9] Ibid., 20.

[10] Ibid., 14.

[11] Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 120.

income. Full employment and high levels of consumer spending led to sustained economic growth and contributed to nationwide optimism.[12]

Federal housing policies reinforced conformity and consensus, particularly programs developed during President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veterans Administration (VA), helped alleviate unemployment and expand residential home construction by making inexpensive, long-term mortgages available to returning G.I.s and millions of American families.[13] By providing the financial means for the white middle and working classes to do what had previously been reserved for the wealthy, the federal government facilitated the movement of millions of middle-class Americans to the fringes of the central cities, and in essence subsidized the growth of the suburbs while hollowing out older urban areas across the country.[14]

If FHA mortgages and postwar economic prosperity provided Americans the financial means to move to the suburbs, the automobile provided the physical mobility necessary to travel from the city to the new subdivisions relatively quickly and comfortably.[15] The mass-produced automobile increasingly became the primary transportation of choice for Americans, evidenced by voters' consistent support for new

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[12] Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys and Trailer Parks: Chasing the American Dream in the Postwar Consumer Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 4-12.

[13] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 203-204.

[14] Ibid., 206-207.

[15] Ibid., 188.

roads from the 1920s—when the inevitability of private automobile dominance was first accepted by decision-makers and everyday Americans—onward.[16]

High-paying blue collar industrial jobs as well as ever-increasing numbers of white collar office jobs ensured Americans' ability to buy one or more automobiles.[17] Production spiked and automobile ownership became a staple of the American lifestyle, even for those who continued to live in urban neighborhoods. As more and more Americans drove cars to work and for entertainment, new suburban developments were built to accommodate automobiles and farther from the old urban cores than ever before. Houses were built farther apart than they had been in the cities, and because it was expected that patrons would drive to their destinations, banks, restaurants, movie theaters, and other amenities were built even farther away from one's home. Thus the automobile helped shape the spatial characteristics of American suburbs.[18]

The automobile, from one perspective, represented the democratization of mobility. From another, it represented a consumer good not available to the poorest Americans that threatened their mobility. Public transportation had been in a slow cycle of decline since World War I. As historian Kenneth T. Jackson notes, roads were deemed a public good and thus worthy of taxes, but transit companies were viewed as private businesses that should stand on their own. "Thus," Jackson writes, "Americans taxed and

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[16] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 254-255; Mark H. Rose, *Interstate: Express Highway Politics, 1939-1989* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 99. Rose notes how Americans consistently voted to limit gas tax revenues to only road construction instead of general funds and other state services.

[17] Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 114-115, 118.

[18] Joseph Interrante, "The Road to Autotopia: The Automobile and the Spatial Transformation of American Culture," in *The Automobile and American Culture*, ed. David L. Lewis and Laurence Goldstein, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1983), 91. This consumer-driven process, dubbed "metropolitanism," first took noticeable form in the 1920s and 1930s.

harassed public transportation even while subsidizing the automobile like a pampered child."[19] Transit companies were hamstrung. If they turned to higher fares, ridership declined further. Streetcars were also targeted by General Motors, with the intention of replacing them with gasoline-powered buses as early as 1950.[20] Developers would increasingly build suburban tracts with few accommodations for pedestrians.

In another sense, consensus referred to the widespread agreement that the future of the central cities depended on a number of specific solutions. The national consensus and its effects helped shape the direction of politics and culture, but the local economic situation, political culture, and history influenced its direction as well. In every major U.S. city, downtown business interests and urban politicians witnessed the mass migration to the suburbs and saw their cities and their livelihoods threatened, not only by the direct loss of consumers but also by the loss of industry, a sector of the economy that accounted for a substantial number of jobs and a large portion of the cities' tax revenue. In St. Louis and other cities, industry was either leaving or had no room to expand.

Blinded to other factors such as racism, federal subsidies, and the preference for suburbs, many placed blame for the growing suburban migration and decentralization of commerce and industry on traffic congestion, a by-product of a densely populated environment and, in the 1950s, widespread automobile use. That assumption had been the conventional wisdom preached by planners since the early years of the twentieth century,

[19] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 170.

[20] Ibid.

and there was little sign that that form of consensus would change at mid-century. If the city were to compete, bold—even drastic—measures were needed.[21]

As urban historian Robert M. Fogelson notes, drastic measures seemed all the more urgent to politicians and businessmen because downtowns had for years no longer been the only centers of economic activity in American cities. Once seen as inevitable, the business centers' dominance of their regions had slowly been whittled away by decentralization and the economic effects of the depression and World War II. New outlying business centers prospered in surrounding neighborhoods. With local merchants and chain stores located in those districts ready and willing to meet the needs of the local communities, downtown businessmen, particularly department store owners, felt increasingly vulnerable. Many believed that if their particular downtown could be more accessible to the automobile, then the decline of their central business district, and thus their city, would slow.[22]

To achieve public approval and to widen the extent of their projects to save their downtowns, businessmen and politicians in St. Louis and numerous other cities began concerted public relations campaigns against "blight,"[23] a vague, euphemistic term used to describe neighborhoods that appeared economically threatened or stagnating, even if they were healthy by other standards. Though rarely explicitly discussed, race and class were key components of this designation as well as the federal and local actions that resulted from it. The most notorious slums in most U.S. cities including St. Louis were

[21] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 271.

[22] Ibid., 249.

[23] Ibid., 346-352.

predominantly populated by marginalized ethnic minorities or, most often, African Americans. While both groups had been excluded from many other city neighborhoods both socially and financially, black residents were also generally barred from settling in all-white neighborhoods.

While on the one hand the federal government spread the prosperity of the postwar era to millions of Americans, it simultaneously restricted access to that prosperity by institutionalizing racist housing practices. FHA appraisers, swayed by both their own prejudices and official euphemistic guidelines regarding "character" and "property values," surveyed residential districts and negatively coded areas that were considered loan risks.[24] African Americans, who began moving to northern and Midwestern cities in great numbers since the 1920s, found that affordable mortgages were not available to them. Otherwise stable areas were deemed blighted and thus loan risks simply because of the presence of African Americans.[25] The fact that the squalid conditions many black Americans lived in were forced upon them was lost on many whites who saw their own neighborhoods teetering on the edge of becoming slums, in part because decision-makers officially predicted the change. Fearing a decline in property values and fueled by racism and the availability of federal subsidies, white property owners and tenants often responded with exclusion, violence, or, increasingly, flight to the suburbs.

The growing depletions of housing stock, industry, and commerce led to the widespread belief, expressed by planners, mayors, businessmen, and eventually the

[24] Evan McKenzie, *Privatopia: Homeowner Associations and the Rise of Residential Private Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 66-67.

[25] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 208-209.

federal government, that U.S. cities needed to be rebuilt. At the same time local leaders advocated clearance and redevelopment of those slums or blighted areas, they also proposed, designed, and lobbied for urban expressways, the supposed cure-all for the problems of congestion and decentralization. To accomplish their objectives, those groups needed public approval, and to achieve that they needed to control the debate. During the 1950s, the most effective means of doing so was the appropriation of the republican "good of the whole" over that of "the individual," influenced by progressivism as well as the particular historical circumstances of each city. By using this rhetoric, leaders could widen the consensus and see their goals realized. Thus, almost all urban development projects from the 1940s onward were created under the banner of "progress."

The root of that word—progress—is difficult to assess, but by the 1950s it was so engrained in American public discourse that it needed little explanation to the people that used it or heard it. Reformers had waged a long struggle for moral control of the perceived unwieldy cities since at least the 1820s. Over time, the term progress manifested itself in those efforts in the form of Sunday schools, playgrounds, the YMCA, civic pageants, tenement reform, and urban planning, all with the intention of elevating the lowly masses to higher ideals of behavior and interaction. The reformers believed that in doing so they could reduce the likelihood of class conflict.[26]

By the early twentieth century, reformers placed virtually every reform campaign within a republican context of working toward the common good, for the progress of all over the selfish desires of the few. Virtually all levels of American politics appropriated

[26] Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

the language of the "the people" versus "the interests," no matter how credible the distinction was, with those at the top equating their wishes with "the people" just as much as common Americans did.[27] The rhetoric of shared progress thus could be used to marginalize any contradicting viewpoint as self-interested.

This disconnect between rhetoric and actual motives in American politics could be traced to the constitutional debate of the late eighteenth century. As historian Gordon Wood notes, Federalists successfully appropriated the "language that more rightfully belonged to their opponents. . . . By using the most popular and democratic rhetoric available to explain and justify their aristocratic system, the Federalists helped foreclose the development of an American intellectual tradition which has mitigated and often obscured the real social antagonisms of American politics."[28]

That rhetorical legacy remained alive and well in the 1950s. By then, progress in the urban context (if it could be defined) vaguely represented a newer, better city of the future that benefited all who resided in it. For decision-makers—in addition to the automobile and the freedom it entailed—progress also meant better roads, removal of dangerous and stagnating neighborhoods, modern housing, and thriving commercial and industrial districts. In the context of the "liberal consensus," it referred to robust and sustained economic growth that would bring benefit to all Americans and sustain the American way of life. Cities would be lifted as wholes, making them better able to compete with one another. Because problems were deemed technical and not

[27] James J. Connolly, "Progressivism and Pluralism," in *American Public Life and the Historical Imagination*, ed. Wendy Gamber, Michael Grossberg, and Hendrik Hartog, (Norte Dame, Ind.: University of Norte Dame Press, 2003), 53.

[28] Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 562.

insurmountable or indefinable, projects would be implemented, just as the progressives had advocated, by educated professionals such as urban planners and engineers. Acquiescing with the experts thus led to progress and reinforced consensus.

Still, tensions rooted in local historical circumstances and social and political power made progress, defined at the top, less than savory to those who consistently felt neglected by it. In St. Louis, some neighborhood-focused residents and businessmen believed that progress benefited a select group of business leaders and politicians more than the people at the neighborhood level, and to a large degree they were correct. Dependent on patronage politics to meet their daily needs, the power of working-class and ethnic neighborhoods in St. Louis came from the local level. But because, by the 1950s, a larger consensus dominated, protesters from those neighborhoods would increasingly approach issues the only way they could: adaptation and compromise through the consensus framework.

For example, nearly every anti-expressway argument made by neighborhood residents would acknowledge the "need" for expressways in St. Louis. That point, they would admit, was not debatable. In fact, the rhetoric of progress would demand that they qualify every protesting statement. Rather than deny progress to the city, they would just want to modify the route to serve an even greater good. Though in the context of the 1950s consensus it would be their only choice, this protracted approach would ultimately limit their success.

Despite leaving its mark on cities across the United States, this era of early urban expressway planning is often obscured by the sweeping changes brought by the famous Interstate Highways Act passed by Congress and signed by President Dwight

Eisenhower. By providing 90 percent federal funding for expressway projects across the country, the legislation transformed how Americans moved and lived. So sweeping were the act and its effects that they allowed many to simplistically place a marker for the beginning of the expressway era precisely at 1956. Widespread acceptance of that year as the clear dividing line between two distinct eras, by the general public and some scholars, incorrectly downplays the complexity and importance of the larger historical processes out of which those highways were born.

Some researchers have addressed this problem somewhat successfully, but few have devoted more than a sentence or two to pre-Interstate urban expressways and even less to community opposition. Some, such as historians Mark H. Rose and Tom Lewis, successfully place the initial urban expressways in a longer narrative in which the urban expressways were only steps toward the final, more comprehensive interstate highway system.[29] Lewis devotes a whole chapter to one specific case of how organized community opposition influenced expressway routing, but he and Rose both write little or nothing of opposition prior to 1956. In his case study of racial tensions in mid-century Detroit, historian Thomas J. Sugrue fills in key details on how neighborhood associations and citizens worked to stop the influx of African Americans into their working-class neighborhoods, but he mentions almost nothing about the role of those same groups in the expressway debate, relegating that important contextual information to a footnote.[30] Most other scholars who focus on freeway opposition emphasize later decades. For

[29] Rose, *Interstate*; Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (New York: Viking, 1997).

[30] Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and In Postwar Detroit* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), n:340.

instance, urban historian Raymond A. Mohl focuses mostly on the more widespread anti-freeway movements of the 1960s and 1970s (with good reason: an estimated four hundred controversies occurred nationwide by the 1970s), but misses the opportunity to acknowledge the successes and failures earlier movements.[31]

Certain instances of pre-Interstate expressway planning and opposition have been detailed elsewhere, providing a window into the dominant themes of the postwar consensus era and how they played out on the local level. Perhaps the most vividly documented case of a 1950s highway fight that ultimately led to disaster and ruin for a whole urban neighborhood is the case of East Tremont in the Bronx, New York, a densely-populated staging area for Jewish immigrants and other Eastern European ethnic groups. Biographer Robert Caro memorably documents how New York City civic project guru Robert Moses planned to route the Cross-Bronx Expressway through a stable working-class community of the borough. Routing the highway directly through the area would require the demolition of hundreds of apartments and the displacement of thousands of tenants. Though the Cross-Bronx was just one of many expressway built or proposed for the New York's five boroughs, Moses and other decision-makers believed it needed to be built as proposed in order to modernize the city. As citizens would in St.

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[31] Richard O. Davies, *The Age of Asphalt: The Automobile, the Freeway, and the Condition of Metropolitan America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1975), 32. For a general overview, including a detailed examination of fights in Miami and Baltimore, as well as a brief mention of fights in San Francisco, see Raymond A. Mohl, "Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities," *Journal of Urban History* 30 (2004): 674-706. In Alan Lupo, Frank Colcord, and Edmund P. Fowler, *Rites of Way: The Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1971), the authors detail strong opposition in that city a subsequent reversal in government policy in the late-1960s. For a description of one the first successes in completely stopping a freeway, see Ben Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved* (New York: Donald W. Brown Inc., 1971), in which he describes the fight waged by residents of New York City's Greenwich Village against the Lower Manhattan Expressway proposed by Robert Moses. Other sources include Charles E. Connerly, "From Racial Zoning to Community Empowerment: The Interstate Highway System and the African American Community in Birmingham, Alabama," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 22 (2002): 99-114 and Zachary M. Schrag, "The Freeway Fight in Washington, D.C.: The Three Sisters Bridge in Three Administrations," *Journal of Urban History* 30 (2004) 648-673.

Louis, many people in East Tremont organized, attended hearings, and presented alternative options to the proposed route. Moving it directly next to a park, they claimed, would save hundreds of hard-earned family dwellings.

Moses, the epitome of the expert-as-decision-maker of the 1950s and supremely confident in his own judgment, gave very little regard to protests. Because his position gave him weighted authority in the postwar era, the Cross-Bronx was constructed as he originally proposed, with a curiously veering one-mile path directly through East Tremont. The results were disastrous. Thousands of dwelling units were destroyed and even more people had to be relocated. Those who could not leave the neighborhood managed to get by, but rarely had extra disposable income, making any move for dwelling improvements, even with compensation, extremely difficult. This in turn made the physical condition of the neighborhood worse. The fact that the residents earned meager incomes and possessed ethnic heritage likely diminished their collective power at fighting consensus in 1953.[32] By the 1970s the South Bronx became the epitome of the urban ghetto, and it all started, Caro argues somewhat simplistically, with a single highway.[33]

The Cross-Bronx experience serves as an illustrative example of the power of expert decision-makers in the postwar era. The solutions they imposed seemed to serve the ends of a select group of people, with little regard for local input from the poorer neighborhoods that would bear the brunt of such solutions. In North St. Louis, the fight

[32] Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 851-894. As a biographer of a truly unique individual who shaped both the history of New York and city planning in general, Caro tends to diminish the push for expressways as part of a national movement and how the larger context affected the Cross-Bronx planning and protest.

[33] Ibid.

against the proposed Mark Twain Expressway practically coincided with the fight against the infamous Cross-Bronx Expressway in the early 1950s.

The effectiveness of opposition to urban expressways in the 1950s was indicative of the social power structure of the postwar era. In some cases, such as East Tremont, women organized and led the opposition. Though women were certainly involved, the fights in early 1950s St. Louis were dominated by white, middle-class home-owning men, who held prominent positions such as merchants or clergy within their communities. The local leaders most assuredly worked for their own interests, but they represented the interests of neighborhood working-class homeowners and white tenants of different ethnic backgrounds, men and women, more closely than the mayor, planners, and downtown business leaders. And while neighborhood alliances did not cross racial lines, they did cross ethnic boundaries where they existed, united by whiteness, geography, religion, community, and economics.

It is worth noting that although local citizens and neighborhood groups were fighting consensus, they were not entirely alone in their opposition to the larger political forces that produced expressways. Several astute critics of highway policy in the United States pointed to the negative effects that local communities openly feared and experienced. In general, these educated sources were virtually unknown by the urban residents.

Urban historian and critic Lewis Mumford, author of numerous works including *The City in History*, would suggest in his collection of essays, *The Highway and the City*, that when Congress appropriated funds for Interstate highways, the nicest thing he could say was “that they hadn’t the faintest notion of what they were doing.” Americans, he

would write, were bound by the "religion of the motorcar," and when they have realized what they had done "it will be too late to correct all the damage to our cities and countryside."[34]

In addition to Mumford, Jane Jacobs, author of the influential *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, would notably criticize highway construction through city neighborhoods in the 1950s and 1960s. As a resident of New York's Greenwich Village, she would personally participate in a movement to stop the Robert Moses-designed Lower Manhattan Expressway—just one of several planned expressways for the densely populated island—from cutting across the city and her neighborhood. Jacobs would prove to be a thoughtful voice, but her most influential writings, published in the early 1960s, would come too late to save many communities facing consensus.

In Jacobs's estimation, urban planners in the 1950s and early 1960s worked within a misguided and rarely questioned consensus framework which she deemed strictly "orthodox." She suggested that planners and architectural designers, both consciously and unconsciously, worked toward two very different ideals, Ebenezer Howard's Garden City, and European architect Le Corbusier's Radiant City. One advocated suburban living with open spaces and detached housing, while the other pushed for densely populated towers in gardens connected via expressways. This wrongheaded contradiction, Jacobs contended, caused them to ignore the complexities of the built environment in older cities such as St. Louis and impose needless zoning regulations.[35]

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[34] Lewis Mumford, *The Highway and the City* (New York: Mentor Books, 1963), 244.

[35] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 3-25. Le Corbusier's vision is expressed in *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning*.

Dense, aging neighborhoods such as those in much of North St. Louis did not fit well into the dominant framework. Like similar traditionally ethnic areas in other cities such as the heavily Italian North End in Boston, of which Jacobs' would write, many older sections of North St. Louis were complex, useful places that met the daily needs of those communities, as defined by those communities.[36] They were not, as some planners suggested, blighted or expendable for the civic good. Rather than trying to figure out the usefulness of those neighborhoods and how they contribute to how cities actually work, planners, according to Jacobs, developed numerous criteria on how a city "ought to work."[37] By many prevalent standards, the communities of North St. Louis in the early 1950s did not work as experts thought they should.

On the drive from downtown St. Louis to the St. Louis County suburbs (and beyond), most casual drivers might think that the road itself beneath them had nothing to do with the fall of North St. Louis. On that count, they would be incorrect. Other curious drivers might, on the other hand, think that the expressway was wholly responsible for the fall. That assumption, while widely accepted, is too simplistic to explain the visual barrage of decay that lines the expressway. This thesis does not debate the fact that Interstate 70, originally named the Mark Twain Expressway, played a role in the fall of the North Side. The expressway, however, did so with so many other events and processes that blaming it solely is inaccurate. Therefore, while this work accepts that the expressway played at least a partial role in the North Side's decline, it approaches the

[36] Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,* 8-13.

[37] Ibid., 8.

expressway and North St. Louis from another direction. As a symbol of dramatic change, the Mark Twain Expressway can say a lot about where the city has been and where its residents and leaders thought it would go at different points in time.

The central questions of this thesis then are: how did the Mark Twain Expressway, from conception to proposal to construction, develop its final path, and how was it influenced by local history and the social and political climate of both St. Louis and the nation in the early 1950s? It strives to answer how a deeply entrenched oligarchic business community allied with civic leaders could implement their wishes over the complaints of a long-adversarial and formidable local patronage-influenced political and social structure based in outlying neighborhoods. It will show how older communities attempted to combat rhetoric born out of social and political fragmentation and a growing consensus that held that their way of life did not fit. Expressways were visible, useful symbols of the future that both decision-makers and working- and middle-class Americans found almost impossible to resist.

Chapter I traces the growth of St. Louis from its founding as a small frontier trading center in 1764 to a bustling metropolis containing over 856,000 residents and numerous ethnic groups by the mid-twentieth century. The origins and development of civic planning in St. Louis from the late nineteenth century onward, culminating in the birth of expressways and urban redevelopment, is also explored. Later in the chapter, I introduce several areas within the North St. Louis study area, explaining how their independent roots and localized focus laid the foundation for civic disconnection concerning projects supposedly intended to benefit the civic whole.

Chapter 2 outlines how the issue of race subtly, but powerfully, influenced expressway planning and protest. This discussion includes the wide-reaching implications of official federal coding for home mortgages and of widely cited city planning euphemisms that simplistically designated neighborhood quality and desirability. City leaders used terms such as “blight” and “slums” in their fight for new expressways. On the other side of the debate, the primary groups that would fight the proposed expressway route, North Side neighborhood improvement and protective associations, will be discussed. Examination of some of the groups’ origins in racially-motivated protection of their neighborhoods will provide a window to why they fought the expressway so intensely.

Chapter 3 traces the spread of the expressway opposition via those improvement associations, as well as aldermen and state representatives, in protest meetings and political maneuvers. It will probe how antagonism between downtown business interests and local business associations influenced the direction of the fight, and implications the Mark Twain Expressway promised for each. The emergence of a coalition of powerful downtown leaders meant to facilitate the remaking of St. Louis will be examined, as well.

Chapter 4 highlights how the nationwide consensus concerning expressways helped downtown business leaders, engineers, and planners sway the opposition based on the North Side. The final routing of the expressway was determined by numerous forces and interests, but it was also accomplished with the political skills of a very shrewd and persuasive mayor. The story concludes in the Epilogue with a description of fifty years of decline on the North Side following the construction of the Mark Twain Expressway,

while a brief Appendix traces the planning and remarkably similar opposition to St. Louis's other expressways.

This thesis will also to some degree reconstruct North Side communities of the early 1950s to demonstrate the breadth of what was lost owing to the complicated mix of factors that converged on North St. Louis. Real places, real connections, real communities were fractured beyond fixing. As the areas evolved, new communities were created, both in the cities and in the suburbs, but while the suburban areas thrived, the new urban communities often lacked the availability of goods, stable social networks, and economic activity of previous communities and were plagued by vastly more problems.

This study focuses primarily on neighborhoods within the path of the proposed Mark Twain Expressway and those that would be affected by it, indirectly but still substantially. Each neighborhood possessed characteristics, geography, and culture at particular points in time, defined best by the residents that lived in it. In the interest of providing clear explanations, the author utilizes somewhat simplistic—though hopefully generally correct—naming conventions for these neighborhoods: Murphy-Blair (Old North St. Louis), Hyde Park, College Hill, Fairgrounds Park, O'Fallon, Walnut Park, and Baden, were all vaguely defined by the St. Louis Community Development Agency in the early 1970s, though I have made some adjustments influenced by source material. I refer to the study area, as a whole, as the North Side.

North St. Louis in the early 1950s was a place similar to numerous others across the country, prone to nostalgia by former and current residents for some very real reasons. While what happened there was typical of the strong political, social, and economic forces urban communities faced in the mid-twentieth century it demands to be

noted that what happened in North St. Louis was not inevitable. It was the product of motivations, decisions, successes, and failures—large and small, from the individual home to the neighborhood to the city to Washington, D.C.—and the effects are felt to this day. The Mark Twain Expressway stands as an example of that era. But to better understand why its planning, construction, and effects were so complex, one must take exits along the way and get out of the car.

Chapter I

Before the Expressway: St. Louis, the North Side, and the Seeds of Division to 1950

To understand how some influential citizens in St. Louis came to advocate for expressways and how many others came to oppose them, it is helpful to follow the city's population and physical development from a French colony in the eighteenth century to a huge but somewhat declining American metropolis just after World War II. To a remarkable degree, the history of St. Louis, at the core of the largest metropolitan area in the state of Missouri, has always been shaped by the meeting of its own culture with events dictated outside its borders.

Development from Early Settlement to the Early Twentieth Century: Growth, Divisions, and Planning

Founded in 1764 by French fur trapper Pierre Laclede and his young Creole nephew, Auguste Chouteau, on the Mississippi River ten miles south of its confluence with the Missouri, St. Louis passed from French to Spanish and briefly back to French control by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The original grid, made of perpendicular streets along the riverfront in a fashion similar to New Orleans, served as a loose guide for the physical development of St. Louis, which at that time was populated predominantly by Creole Catholic trappers, farmers, small merchants, or artisans.[1] When

[1] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 28-29.

war in Europe caused financial strains for the French, Napoleon sold Louisiana, including St. Louis, to the United States in 1803, doubling the size of the young country.[2]

Between 1804 and 1810, the population of St. Louis grew modestly from 1,200 to 1,400, while the district surrounding it witnessed an influx of farmers from Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina and doubled in population. Eighty percent of the new citizens that came to St. Louis in the first two decades of U.S. control were American-born and eventually outnumbered the long-settled Creole population. By 1820, St. Louis had 4,598 residents, with over 300 buildings.[3]

In the 1820s, St. Louis continued to be subject to events happening outside its borders. No longer chess piece in the world game of empire, the city, and the Missouri Territory in which it was located, were thrust into contentious national debate on the issue of slavery. The most successful merchants, traders, professionals, and politicians in St. Louis all owned slaves, which in turn shaped a general pro-slavery consensus in the city. After much debate, the Missouri Compromise of 1820 stipulated that Missouri would enter the Union as a slave state only if it were balanced by another free state. Crucially, the compromise temporarily quieted rising divisions throughout the country on slavery, and St. Louis continued to grow as a trading center and incorporated in 1822.[4]

During this time period, St. Louis first witnessed an early form of suburbanization. As historian Eric Sandweiss notes, “long before streetcar tracks or highways, before industrialization or redlining, city residents spread themselves far from

[2] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 33.

[3] Ibid., 86-86, 108.

[4] Ibid., 118-119, 122.

the heart of the city," first in surrounding colonial villages, followed by modest additions in the early American period that were eclipsed by speculator-driven subdivisions on the periphery. Many of the first subdivisions were annexed by St. Louis in 1835, but subdividing continued. In the next five years, fifty-two were dedicated, most of which fell outside the city limits.[5]

In the decade following the nationwide depression of the 1820s, the economy of St. Louis improved somewhat as new migrants flooded the city, doubling its population between 1835 and 1840 to 35,390, and allowing St. Louis to eclipse another growing city, Pittsburgh, within five years. The Irish potato famine of the mid 1840s and the German Revolution of 1848 created waves of immigrants from Ireland and Germany that settled in the city. By 1850, despite heavy losses from the cholera epidemic and out-migration due to the California gold rush, as well as tensions between nativists and immigrants, the city's population more than doubled from ten years earlier. Nearly forty-three percent of St. Louis's residents were either immigrants from Germany (29%) or Ireland (12.5%), and with second-generation citizens the number was more than fifty percent.[6] These ethnic groups settled in various areas on the North and South Sides and became dependable bases for political parties, with Germans usually voting Republican and the Irish usually supporting Democrats.

Despite these influxes and the large presence of northeastern merchants, influence over internal civic affairs remained to a substantial degree in the hands of the old Creole elite, who looked for ways to exercise influence over land development. Public office

[5] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 40, 43.

[6] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 147, 171, 172-173.

served as means to secure that influence, as evidenced by the fact that many mid-nineteenth century profit-driven subdivision developers held political offices from the statehouse to the mayor's office. An ordinance passed in 1839 emphasized the connection between business and public office by requiring elected officials to be landowners, a connection that would have implications in the mid-twentieth century.[7]

Reflecting the federal trend of disposal of public lands, state and local authorities granted citizens the right to buy, at the highest bid, tracts of the city's 2,000-acre Common in the late 1830s. The sale to some degree gave local development authority to the local government, but it more clearly ensured that only the wealthiest subdivision developers would dictate the direction of that development. By opening the common to the community—who, by virtue of the financial restrictions, were wealthy subdivision developers—the government was working toward the community good while ensuring its authority.[8] On the other hand, the selling of the Common to developers, who then sold lots to individuals, ensured that individual lot buyers would help contribute to spatial development of the city, effectively fragmenting the landscape in a somewhat democratic manner.

After boundary expansion in 1853 added numerous outlying subdivisions to the city, St. Louis, with 160,733 inhabitants, ranked as the eighth largest city in the United States by 1860. Cincinnati, New Orleans, and Boston were slightly larger, but St. Louis still led Chicago, its primary economic competitor, by 50,000 persons.[9] This ranking

[7] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 45, 48.

[8] Ibid., 51.

[9] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 201.

meant less than it suggested, though. Through aggressive exploitation of the environment of its growing hinterland, rapid railroad construction, and the infusion of Eastern capital that had been disinvested from St. Louis, Chicago now controlled that city's former northern hinterland. As Chicago moved closer to economic domination of the West, St. Louis merchants were increasingly forced to focus on regional trade and the city's southern hinterland.[10]

St. Louis nonetheless grew after the Civil War. By 1870, with 310,000 residents, the census (despite credible cries of fraud from the Chicago press) ranked St. Louis as the fourth-largest city in the country, behind New York, Philadelphia, and Brooklyn. The ranking encouraged the city's boosters to proclaim St. Louis as the future great city of the world. The city's location at the center of the country, at the confluence of two great rivers, and its place along the "isothermal zodiac," a geographic parallel on which many of the great civilizations supposedly developed, led boosters to claim that St. Louis would naturally become the nation's capital and commercial center.[11]

However, boosters failed to note the degree to which Eastern investors were already entrenched in Chicago. That city officially surpassed St. Louis in population in 1880, having already surpassed it economically. Still, St. Louis remained a major trading and shipping center, as more railroads converged there than at any other point in the U.S. Only Chicago had more commercial rail traffic.[12] The loss of dominance to Chicago

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[10] William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. North & Company, 1991), 295-309; Jeffrey S. Adler, *Yankee Merchants and the Making of the Urban West: The Rise and Fall of Antebellum St. Louis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6-7.

[11] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 287, 288-289, 291.

[12] Ibid., 291, 312.

stands as a crucial example of St. Louis failing to change with the surrounding realities, and would no doubt influence debate surrounding civic improvements for years.

Post-Civil War St. Louis was also characterized by a growing rift between new residential areas on the North and South Sides (most built by private real estate developers) and wealthier, more influential citizens of the central corridor who wished to possess tighter control over the entire civic landscape, not just their own neighborhoods. Historian Eric Sandweiss aptly refers to these two disconnected perspectives as "fenced-off corners" and the "wider setting." Between the end of the war and 1875, the subdivision developers transitioned from wealthy central corridor merchants and attorneys to a more diversified group that increasingly lived in their developments. This led to a more personal, rather than commodified, relationship between developers and the general population of the neighborhoods. Growing specialization and regulation of the building process in the 1870s and 1880s contributed to this localization as well, strengthening the identities of "fenced-off corners" and making a "wider setting" more difficult to achieve.[13]

The tension between the two different perspectives of development in St. Louis was further shaped by events in 1876, a year that stands as a defining point in St. Louis politics and economics to this day. After years of antagonism between the city politicians

[13] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 7, 73-91. Sandwiess uses these two terms effectively throughout his text to explain fragmentation in St. Louis, but as he notes, they were coined at different times. "Fenced-off corner" was coined by the St. Louis Republican in praise of the passage of charter amendments—which eliminated the ward-by-ward elected House of Delegates and left the (at the time) at-large-elected Board of Aldermen in 1901 as the only legislative body in St. Louis (191). When angry property owners opposed the construction of a new courthouse on 12th Street and concurrent beautification plans in 1904 and drew up a counter-proposal, city planning activist John Gundlach creatively used popular rhetoric to serve his own ends at the moment, stating that they were "so absorbed by the bewitching glamour of this new found jewel of civic improvement that they fail to note the wider setting of which the plaza is but a part," quoted in Sandweiss, 222.

and merchants and the rest of the state's population, politicians in the prosperous and dense river city wished to no longer use their tax dollars to fund the spacious, relatively thinly-populated St. Louis County, in which the city was located. Still, the county had been growing in recent years to 40,000 residents outside the city. So an effective divorce—a separation from the rest of the county and the drafting of the nation's first municipal home-rule charter—was approved by the state in 1875. One year later, the city of St. Louis became an independent entity, both a city and county, completely separate from the county of the same name. By ensuring that the city's tax dollars would be spent in the city, local proponents believed the divorce would ensure robust economic and population growth indefinitely.[14]

The divorce, despite evidence of fraud, had been approved by voters by a close vote, and accounted for the expansion of the city's boundaries far beyond areas already settled, more than doubling the city's size. At the time, it seemed the 61 square miles, which included much undeveloped farmland, would serve the city's growth and space needs forever. That assumption would contribute to the crippling of the city's future development by rendering it helpless to combat economic decentralization and residential growth outside its borders in the mid-twentieth century. To a large degree, it would also provide rationale for civic projects with ever-increasing scope, but the immediate effects obscured any possible problems. As the city engulfed new settlements, its population increased and the county's population decreased. St. Louis city was now much larger than the county and would be for many decades.

[14] Stein, *St. Louis Politics*, 3.

The charter—while it left some control of the city in the hands of the legislature, such as the police force and the large numbers of county offices—also reflected a centralization of authority in St. Louis at the expense of outlying areas. The mayor's term was increased from 2 to 4 years. The old city council, which formerly contained two members elected from each ward, was replaced by a council consisting of property owners elected at large for four years and a house of delegates, which allowed for only one individual elected from each ward. All commissions charged with urban development, including those that oversaw streets, sewers, water, and parks, were consolidated into a mayoral-appointed Board of Public Improvements, which would make case-by-case decisions concerning all civic improvement projects. Previously, such development usually had been the province of private developers and residents. Now, authority would increasingly rest with the influential citizens that populated the central corridor.[15]

New regulations contained in the charter concerning public improvements exacerbated growing differences between the central corridor and newer outlying areas. Prior to 1876, city officials, believing that growth was inevitable, had opened an excessive number of streets but left the responsibility of paying for paving costs to individual property owners, many of whom could not afford it. To make matters worse, the most affordable paving material was very poor in quality. The new charter, ostensibly in order help property owners, had capped the percentage of assessed value that owners would pay for paving.[16]

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[15] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 159-160.

[16] Ibid., 164-166.

This new regulation had effects opposite of those intended. Because their property values were lower on the North and South Sides of the city—often because of their lack of connections to downtown (the area at and around the original settlement of St. Louis located in the easternmost central portion of the city) and their already poorly-paved streets—street paving applications were turned down by the Board of Public Improvements for those areas, where they were needed most. Because the board did not see the improvements as cost-effective for the city, it used rhetoric to deny most applications in the name of the public good.[17]

On the other hand, the board readily approved applications for such improvements in downtown or the West End, where the city's wealthiest increasingly resided. Other projects such as the 1891 Boulevard Law, provided funds for the paving of thoroughfares in the West End and central corridor—and the growing characterization of North and South Side neighborhood residents who complained about those improvements as self-interested—hardened existing differences between the opposing groups and resulted in an increasingly fragmented political landscape.[18]

Divisions between fenced-off corners and the wider setting rooted in the fragmented landscape continued to expand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, further encouraging sectional identification. Outlying neighborhoods became increasingly distinctive physically and socially, with residents relying on ward leaders to meet the specific needs of their daily lives. In another part of town, leaders of finance and

[17] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 164-166.

[18] Ibid., 166-179.

industry consolidated into a small but well-defined and powerful group with common economic interests.[19]

After 1900, the business community increasingly worked to bring the pieces of the city into a cohesive whole through campaigns for beautification, comprehensive planning, and civic improvement projects, accomplished in part by taking control of the public debate through the use of progressive rhetoric. In doing so, they continued to widen the rift between the separate parts of the city. Charter amendments in 1901 removed the locally-elected house of delegates, prompting city newspapers to call the change a triumph over the selfish interests of the wards and neighborhoods. Residents responded with even stronger identification with their own fenced-off corners and localized culture, relying more heavily on local politicians to meet their needs.[20] The lack of improvements in the North and South Side neighborhoods would also lead to the formation of neighborhood improvement associations.

In order to accomplish their objectives, a group of influential downtown businessmen formed the Civic Improvement League in 1902. Three years later, the group, renamed the Civic League, revised its initial goals to include support for more-intensive projects in the city. At the same time, membership widened to include architects, engineers, and professionals. The group's first plan, *City Plan for St. Louis*, was released in 1907, and attacked the supposedly selfish interests of the city's separate

[19] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 185-186.

[20] Ibid., 190-192.

parts. Those parts, the members of the Civic League believed, denied citizens of the city a united, manageable whole.[21]

Drawing on a long tradition of fear of urban vice, class warfare, and accompanying economic decline, much of the Civic League's work reflected the positive environmental perspective that was popular with reformers across the country in the early twentieth century. Accordingly, league members generally believed that creating an aesthetically pleasing and ordered built environment could positively influence behavior, and thus lift up the lowly masses of the city. For example, beautiful, awe-inducing civic buildings, parks, and playgrounds developed through rational, scientific city planning would thus create social cohesion and a better civic whole.[22] The epitome of this perspective was Daniel Burnham's Plan of Chicago published in 1909.

Residents of the West End, who typically pushed for these projects, had for years successfully equated the good of the civic whole with their own interests, which were more complicated than "progress" or "beautification."[23] "Progressive urban environmental reform," as historian Paul Boyer notes, "especially expressed in the city beautiful vogue, the civic-pageant enthusiasm, and the city planning movement, was initiated, guided, and promoted by organized elements of the business elite—an elite still overwhelmingly native born, 'Anglo-Saxon,' and Protestant." Their "civic ideal" rhetoric obscured the class basis of many of their reforms. Progressive rhetoric thus "freed the reformers from almost all restraints in pursuing their objectives.… The values they

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[21] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 192-198.

[22] Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 220-292.

[23] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 192.

espoused were [to them] so obviously desirable that no reasonable person could possibly find them arbitrary, coercive, or colored by class assumptions." The reforms, which also worked to undermine the ward politics on which residents on the North and South Sides depended, "represented another avenue by which the elite extended its influence over the life of the city and expressed its interest in promoting urban social stability."[24] Rather than focusing on the civic whole as they claimed or even genuinely believed, they instead focused on their own interests.

In 1911, the newly-formed, city hall-approved City Plan Commission replaced the Civic League as the primary planning vehicle in St. Louis. Over the next three and a half decades the commission would work rapidly to control the urban landscape through research, planning, and advocacy for improvements. One of the first projects executed by that body was the proposal for the Central Traffic-Parkway, a thoroughfare that would stretch from downtown to Grand Avenue through the central corridor. But like previous efforts by the Civic League, the project's narrow focus and the ensuing rhetoric emphasized divisions between the downtown/West End-oriented community that would benefit directly from the project and the fenced-off corners that would not benefit but still help pay for it.[25]

To realize grand visions for the city, the City Plan Commission brought in experts from other cities, most notably Harland Bartholomew. After gaining recognition for his remarkably successful comprehensive plan for Newark, New Jersey published in 1913,[26]

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[24] Boyer, *Urban Masses*, 281-282.

[25] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 205; 210-211.

[26] Joseph Heathcott, "Harland Bartholomew, City Engineer," in Mark Tranel, ed., *St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis*, 86.

Bartholomew was hired as chief planning commissioner for the St. Louis City Plan Commission in 1917, though he began producing work for the city as early as 1916. Over the next three decades, Bartholomew guided both planning in St. Louis and the urban planning profession, and his firm, Harland Bartholomew and Associates, would be responsible for countless plans for cities and towns across the country.[27] In three successive reports released between 1916 and 1917, Bartholomew examined the whole city, including its disparate pieces on the North and South Sides, and suggested how to restore property values, encourage business, and distribute traffic connections equally throughout the city. Emphasizing the whole over the individual, Bartholomew essentially claimed that the complex and seemingly fragmented pieces of the city could be usefully integrated with one another by applying broader models.[28]

By 1917, based on those studies, Bartholomew drew up the city's first comprehensive plan. While the Missouri legislature never passed an enabling act, city leaders generally adhered to the plan out of custom.[29] Many of its phases—such as opening, widening, and lighting of streets, sewer modernization, and the construction of public buildings such as the Kiel Opera House near the central business district were accomplished with $87 million in bonds passed in 1923.[30] Voter approval of the bond

[27] Ibid., 83.

[28] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 213-221.

[29] "Carrying Out the Comprehensive Plan," *Comprehensive City Plan* (St. Louis: City Plan Commission, 1947), http://stlouis.missouri.org/government/docs/1947plan/, accessed May 20, 2009.

[30] "City Plan Accomplishments 1916-1947," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

issue gave the City Plan Commission more authority to design larger, more complicated projects that would usually benefit downtown more than the neighborhoods.[31]

During the Great Depression, industries in St. Louis, like those in cities across the country, suffered cutbacks, leaving many people unemployed. Bartholomew during that time used his previous successes in St. Louis to take advantage of New Deal contracts that paid for civic project research. Slowly he built a comprehensive information network focused on the parts and the whole of St. Louis.[32]

World War II revived industry, particularly defense-related companies, and fostered population growth in the city, but also presented new problems for St. Louis. Industry was not simply concentrated in the central city as it had once been. In 1939, for example, William McDonnell founded McDonnell Aircraft not within the city limits but adjacent to Lambert Field in St. Louis County, where open land was more abundant. This economic decentralization of the St. Louis region, along with other factors such as declining housing and expanding suburbanization of the region, led Bartholomew and the City Plan Commission to produce the plan that would have the most influence over St. Louis's development in the postwar era, the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947. The plan, much of which was the culmination of thirty years of study, reflected the growing popularity of the automobile and was the first official plan that contained general routes for expressways in the city.[33]

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[31] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 221.

[32] Heathcott, "Harland Bartholomew, City Engineer," in Tranel, *St. Louis Plans*, 95-100.

[33] Mark Abbott, "The 1947 *Comprehensive City Plan* and Harland Bartholomew's St. Louis," in Mark Tranel, ed., *St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis*, 109-110.

St. Louis at Mid-Century and the Origins of Expressway Planning

In many respects, 1950 represented the population and economic peak of American central cities, particularly those in the Northeast and Midwest: a last surge of the older giants before decades of population decline and withering economic influence over their respective regions. Central cities in 1950 were still huge magnets for manufacturing, warehouses, retail, and services, and the size of their populations reflected the large workforce needed to man those industries, but the situation had been uneven in recent decades. Strangulation of industry and commerce during the depression led four of the ten largest U.S. cities between 1930 and 1940 to witness small population drops. World War II revived industrial production and created a wealth of readily available jobs that led almost every large city in the country to record all-time highs in 1950. Fifteen of the twenty largest cities were located either in the Northeast, on the East Coast, or in the Midwest—in the traditional American manufacturing belt. Thirteen of the top twenty contained over 12,000 people per square mile within their borders.[34]

St. Louis closely reflected these nationwide trends. The city held a position in the top ten of population centers for decades prior to 1950. As late as 1910, at 687,029 persons, it was the fourth largest city in the United States, with only New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia housing more residents. St. Louis, along with most of America's largest urban centers, experienced robust growth over the next twenty years. Between 1930 and 1940, however, the city witnessed its first ever ten-year population drop, from 821,960 to 816,048. A decade later, its population surged to 856,796, making it the eighth largest

[34] Campbell Gibson, *Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990*. (Population Division U.S. Bureau of the Census: Washington, D.C., June 1998), Tables 16-18.

city in the U.S., once again behind New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, but now also behind Los Angeles, Detroit, Baltimore, and Cleveland. But it was still larger than Washington, D.C., Boston, and San Francisco. In the early 1950s, though it had declined in prominence among other cities over the preceding decades, the city of St. Louis occupied a substantial position on the national stage

The St. Louis region had a generally diversified economy, with no single industry dominating the city as automobile manufacturing did Detroit or steel production did in Pittsburgh. Major industries in St. Louis included the manufacturing of many different goods, including food products, transportation equipment, metals, machinery, chemicals, and clothing, as well as printing, publishing, and many others.[35] The aerospace industry, led by McDonnell Aircraft Company, would grow substantially in the 1950s as the U.S. space program expanded. The city's brewing companies, led by Anheuser-Busch and Falstaff, among others, were nationally recognizable. Large employers such as breweries also created thousands of "secondary" employees who supplied those companies' various production and retail needs, emphasizing the importance of keeping them in St. Louis.[36] Figure 1 shows the relatively even distribution of occupational types in the city, with skilled craftsmen and foremen making up the largest category.

[35] Metropolitan St. Louis Survey, *Path of Progress for Metropolitan St. Louis* (St. Louis: Metropolitan St. Louis Survey, 1957), 32-33. This section cites U.S. Census number for 1954 as its source.

[36] Ibid., 25-29.

Occupational Type	No. of Employed
Craftsmen and Foremen	86,606
Operatives	49,137
Service	38,279
Government	31,450
Professional and Technical	28,467
Sales	26,994
Managers, Officials, Proprietors	26,628

Figure 1: Major Occupational Categories in St. Louis city, 1950. Source: Historical Census Browser, Geospatial Data Center, University of Virginia.

If 1950 represented a peak for U.S. cities on the surface, looking deeper reveals that the status of those cities, including St. Louis, was beginning to look precarious. Indicative of the realignment of urban America already in motion and the changes that would flower in years to come, cities in the South and West such as Los Angeles were growing rapidly. Houston more than doubled its square mileage between 1940 and 1950, and its population increased from 384,514 to 596,163, making it the fourteenth most-populated city in the United States.[37]

The position of the city of St. Louis within its region was becoming increasingly uncertain, as well. Out-migration to suburbs had accelerated in the 1930s and 1940s (see Figure 2), and there was little reason to suggest the trend would reverse. In the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947, the City Plan Commission forecasted that although St. Louis would certainly grow modestly to an estimated population of 900,000 by 1970 and would remain the primary economic engine of the region, the decentralization of the St.

[37] *Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990*, Tables 14-18. St. Louis's position as the fourth largest city in the U.S. in 1910 (and thereafter) was thanks in part to the consolidation of Greater New York in 1898, in which the city of Brooklyn became a borough of the nation's largest city.

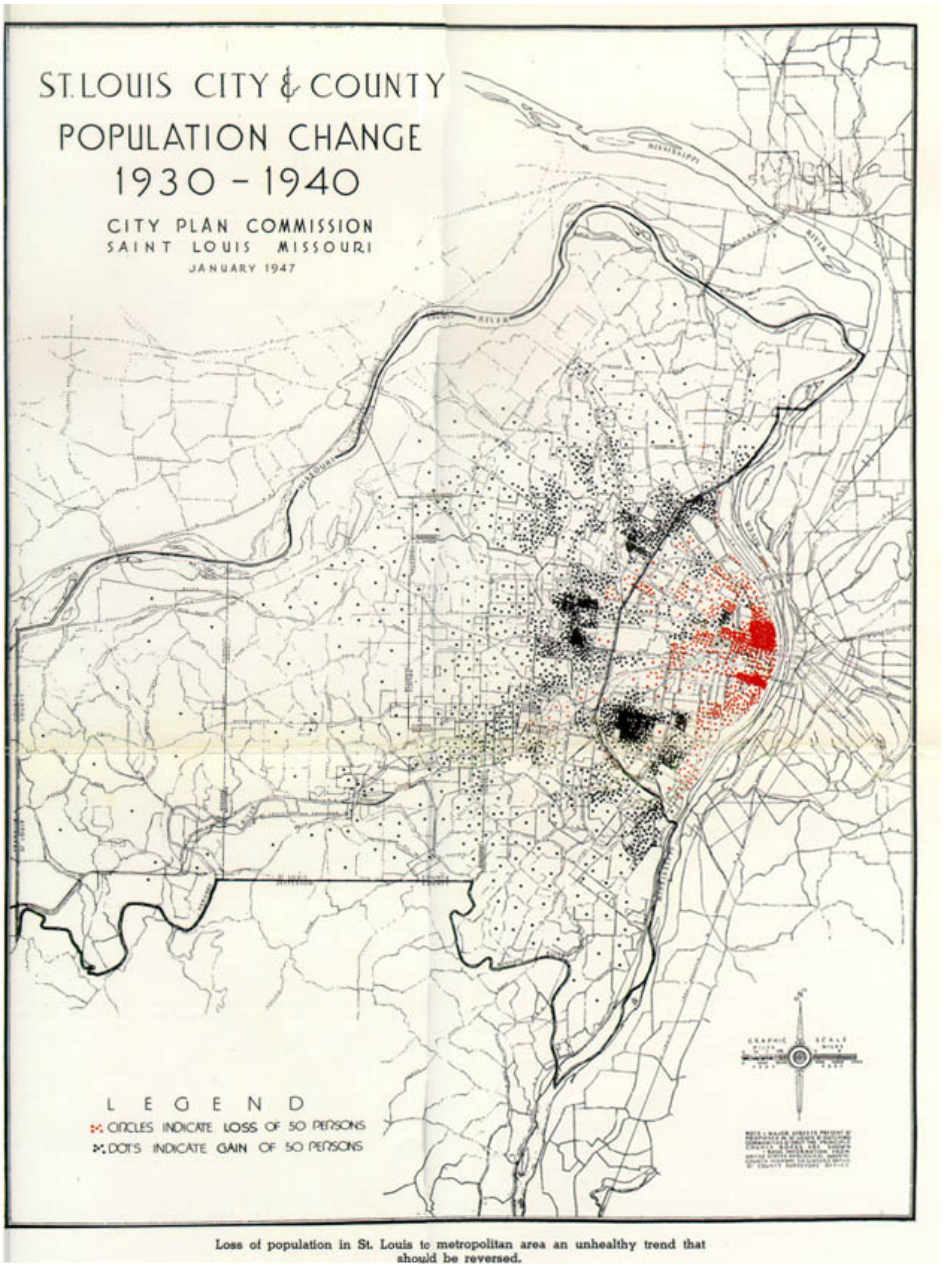

Figure 2: St. Louis City and County Population Change, 1930-1940. During that time period St. Louis witnessed its first overall population loss, with a particularly large decline occurring on the near North Side with the only comparable growth in North St. Louis occurring in Baden and the western edge of Walnut Park. Source: *Comprehensive City Plan*.

Louis region would not stop. Instead of housing 60 percent of the region's population as it did in 1940, the Plan Commission predicted St. Louis city would contain only 54 percent of the regional population by 1970. The population of the metropolitan region as a whole would also grow more slowly,[38] pointing unexpectedly to the declining importance of the manufacturing belt. The city of St. Louis, the commission concluded, was "a maturing urban center that can never expect to attain the tremendous past growth of certain earlier periods."[39]

St. Louis County, politically distinct from the city since the 1876 divorce, contained 274,000 residents in 1940. By 1950, the population of the increasingly suburban county outside the city had swelled nearly 50 percent to 406,000. Comparatively, the city had only grown by just over 40,000 residents to 856,796—much less in both in real numbers and percentage (5%).[40] Figure 3 shows the rapid growth of the city until about 1930, then stabilization thereafter, while the population of the county remained relatively stable until about 1920, and then exploded in the following decades. The portion of northern St. Louis County just across the city-county border was one particular area that prospered as the city began to decline.

[38] "The Metropolitan Community," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

[39] "Population," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

[40] Malcolm Elliott, *Expressway Plan for St. Louis and Adjacent Area* (Jefferson City: State Highway Commission, 1951), 5.

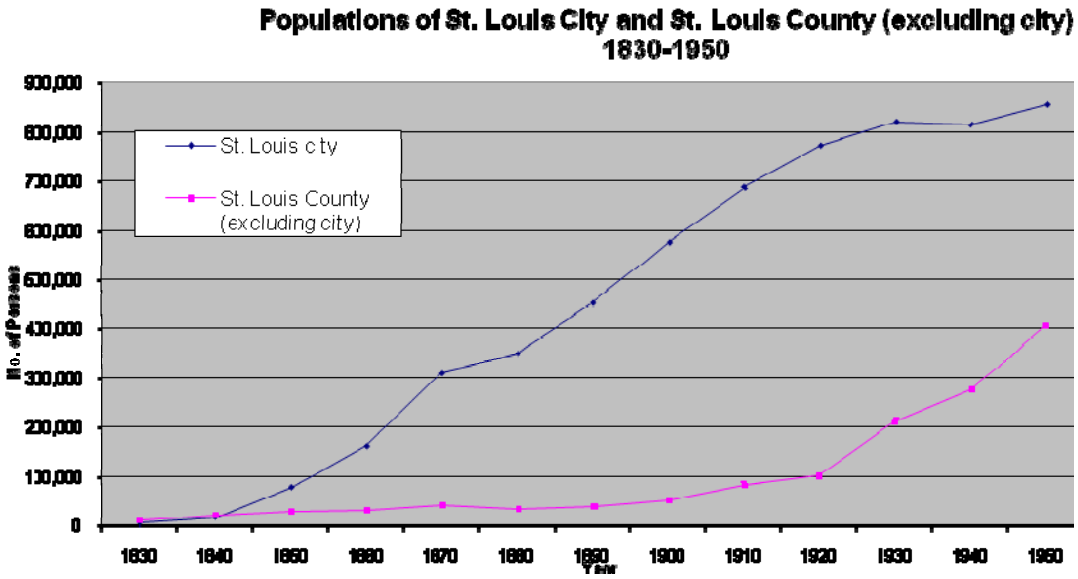

Figure 3: Source: Historical Census Browser, Geospatial Data Center, University of Virginia, fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html; U.S. Bureau of Census, Missouri Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900 to 1990.

On the one hand, this type of suburban growth, occurring so quickly and by so many people, was relatively new to the region. The availability of FHA mortgages to white working- and middle-class families, mostly coming from the city, and the explosion of automobile ownership in the postwar years fueled subdivision development in county areas beyond any previous numbers. On the other hand, suburbanization of St. Louis County and surrounding areas simply represented the St. Louis tradition of moving farther and farther away from the urban core, creating new fenced-off corners.

Several old independent towns such as Florissant and Ferguson had grown larger than ever, but most suburbs in North County had only been incorporated during or since the World War II era. For example, rapidly growing Jennings incorporated in 1946, while smaller suburbs such as Flordell Hills and Country Club Hills became municipal entities

in 1943 and 1945, respectively.[41] Each city developed its own municipal government, school districts, and social institutions. Reflecting the growing readership base and distribution in both in the city and in the county in early 1950s, the subheading of the local North St. Louis newspaper, the *North St. Louis Community News*, claimed to be "serving North St. Louis City and St. Louis County." Because they could become chief economic competitors, the rise of the north county suburbs, as well as other cities in the county such as Clayton, University City, and Kirkwood, aroused concern among St. Louis planners, policymakers, and businessmen in downtown. Figure 4 shows the growth of individual towns in St. Louis County between 1940 and 1950.

	1940	***1950***	***No. Increase***	**Pct. Increase**
St. Louis City	**816,000**	**856,000**	**41,000**	**5**
St. Louis Co.	**274,000**	**406,000**	**132,000**	**48**
Clayton	13,069	15,925	2,856	22
Ferguson	5,724	11,527	5,803	101
Jennings	Not Listed	(15,236)		
Kirkwood	12,132	18,587	6,455	53
Maplewood	12,875	13,238	363	3
Overland	2,934	11,463	8,529	291
Richmond	12,802	14,827	2,025	16
University City	33,023	39,595	6,572	20
Webster Groves	18,394	23,289	4,895	27
Total – Cities Over 10,000	**110,953**	**148,451**	**37,498**	**34**

Figure 4: Population Growth of St. Louis City, County, and Largest Cities of the Metropolitan Area, 1940-1950. St. Louis City and St. Louis County totals are estimates. Source: Elliott Plan, 5.

[41] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 504.

Downtown, the central business district of the city, had been fighting off competition from other districts for decades. In most U.S. cities, outlying business districts began outselling the central business districts as early as the 1920s. One solution downtown department store owners implemented to combat this economic decentralization was the opening of branch stores.[42] This type of business was meant to compete with the chains on the chains' turf. St. Louis's largest and most profitable downtown department stores, Famous-Barr, Stix, Baer and Fuller, and Scruggs, Vandevoort and Barney, had in recent years weathered tough competition from chain stores in outlying business districts such as the Penney's on North Fourteenth Street on the North Side and the Woolworth on Olive and Grand in Midtown, among numerous others. New store locations in outlying areas were necessary for local companies to be competitive.

Land on the North and South Sides, however, was increasingly scarce, making the suburbs ideal homes for these large branch stores. By the early 1950s, all three of the local St. Louis department stores had opened successful branches in Clayton, the St. Louis County seat, just west of the city's border. With more parking and less congestion, these suburban stores and, later, shopping centers, provided something downtown stores could not: easy access. Despite having thousands of parking spaces (78 percent of which were in garages or lots, and the rest found in quick-filling curbside spots), the narrow streets of downtown were clogged daily.[43]

[42] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 199.

[43] "The Central Business District, Adequate Parking Facilities," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

Congestion in downtown and on traffic arteries had been a curiously vexing problem since the late 1800s, with pedestrians, push carts, omnibuses, and streetcars competing for space. As the problem grew throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, planners, businessmen, and reform advocates pushed for several solutions. Height limits were instituted in several cities but often repealed because they either failed to solve the congestion problem or real estate and business leaders, wanting to maximize profits on a small piece of property, pushed for their repeal. Els and subways brought objections on numerous grounds, usually relating to high cost, construction difficulties, and the larger question of who rapid transit would serve the most. Outlying businessmen in many U.S. cities often explicitly implicated downtown businessmen in a scheme to increase profits at the expense of the rest of the city. Fierce debates often ensued. Of the numerous cities in which subway systems were proposed, including St. Louis, only four cities—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago—actually constructed them by midcentury.

Once implemented, subways did not necessarily reduce congestion, in part because the proliferation of the automobile had inflamed the congestion problem to previously unseen proportions. On city streets originally designed for walking, streetcars, buses, trucks, and personal motor vehicles made moving through downtown nearly intolerable. By the late-1920s, planners and business leaders began to look for other measures than rapid transit to make downtown more accessible.[44] It became widely accepted that the automobile would remain the vehicle of choice for Americans. Accordingly, experts would look for ways to solve the traffic problem by widening

[44] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 252.

existing streets and creating new ones, as well as increasing enforcement of traffic regulations, separating different forms of traffic, and eliminating nonessential traffic.[45]

St. Louis also reflected this nationwide trend for large cities. By the 1950s, an article in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* would claim that the streets in St. Louis had "become so thronged with cars that it's hard to crowd in another bus, truck or auto at rush hours."[46] Approximately 180,000 people per day had entered St. Louis's central business district via private automobile in 1947, more than any city with a population 400,000 more or less than St. Louis. The City Plan Commission confirmed the congestion problem by noting that even Detroit, the Motor City, had fewer people entering downtown via automobile, despite having a metropolitan population of 1.1 million more residents than St. Louis.[47] By 1953, following a postwar spike in automobile ownership,[48] the article would claim that "on working days, over 220,000 vehicles head for, or leave, downtown."[49]

Paradoxically, worsening congestion masked the reality that U.S. downtowns were not in the strong position they had been thirty years earlier,[50] and this certainly included St. Louis. The districts appeared busier than ever, but in relative terms the erosion of commerce there had commenced much earlier. The conventional wisdom therefore held that if downtown merchants as a whole were to be competitive with and

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[45] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 255-256.

[46] John Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 1, 1953.

[47] "The Central Business District," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

[48] Rose, *Interstate*, 55.

[49] Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 1, 1953.

[50] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 314.

slow the growth of their suburban counterparts, the automobile must be accommodated even more to *ease* congestion. If not, according to *Globe-Democrat* reporter John Costello in 1953, congestion would continue to fuel "the growth of self-sufficient satellite towns which sap the economic strength of the hub—St. Louis." And if that happened, "the whole metropolitan community will start to come apart at the joints."[51]

The expressway, a relatively new type of multi-lane, limited-access highway, was increasingly viewed as the perfect solution to the problems of accessibility and congestion.[52] Building on previous models such as parkways, downtown-based leaders across the U.S. looked to expressways as a means to accommodate automobiles, provide better access to downtown, and revive the population and economic base of their cities. Cities rushed to build them. If not, many believed their city would fall behind others that were willing to do so. In earlier eras, transportation improvements helped secure the economic futures of cities, such as Chicago had done with railroads in the nineteenth century.

Leaders in downtown St. Louis saw expressways as a major part of the city's wide-ranging revitalization, but made plans for other concerns as well. Almost every facet of the city was studied and re-envisioned by Bartholomew and the planners in the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947, and numerous areas deemed as problems by planners and public officials related to land use, housing, and traffic were thoroughly attacked and confronted with precise large-scale solutions. Addressing those problems immediately would in part serve the goal of "preservation and improvement of the central business district, the indispensable nucleus of the whole metropolitan structure." Better access

[51] Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 1, 1953.

[52] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 275.

would be accomplished, in part, by street improvements (such as the double-decking of Third Street, a busy north-south thoroughfare in downtown), parking restrictions, and automated traffic signals for cars and pedestrians. New off-street parking facilities could accommodate nearly 20,000 automobiles if strategically placed according to commission suggestions.[53] By implementing these measures, the central business district "would be given better access, less congestion, and better off-street parking facilities to replace inadequate curb parking that must be abandoned in favor of moving traffic."[54]

At the core of the *Comprehensive City Plan*'s traffic solutions were three "Interstate Express Highways on the Federal system," all radiating from downtown. While the "revision of public transportation services in the interest of the best disposition of service," was another phase of the plan, the bias for the automobile that planners shared with business leaders dictated official policy. Accommodation of the automobile via expressways and parking would provide the easy access downtown needed and was thus deemed "the modern substitute for subway construction."[55] Approximately 350,000 people entered downtown daily; with improvements nearly 450,000 would be able to enter and leave downtown "without undue congestion."[56]

Urban planners in the 1950s, "basically a diverse group of architects, attorneys, retrained engineers, and trained planners," as described by transportation historian Mark H. Rose, looked to expressways as tools to solve numerous urban problems.

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[53] "The Central Business District: Adequate Parking Facilities," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

[54] "Introduction," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

[55] "The Central Business District: Adequate Parking Facilities," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

[56] "The Central Business District, Improved Access Required for Greater Traffic Volume and Many More Parking Facilities," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

Expressways, they typically believed, could not only eliminate traffic congestion, but also help shape the city as a whole by boosting property values, removing areas of declining value, and rehabilitating neighborhoods. They could promote social cohesion, but also divide neighborhoods from one another, create different zoned districts of land use, and, most important of all, stabilize the downtown business district.[57] By working toward each of those goals at the same time and through other measures, planners worked to fully integrate expressways into daily urban neighborhood life.

Harland Bartholomew was at the forefront of the movement. His comprehensive attack on St. Louis's problems reflected not only the common approaches of the field he helped create, but also the efforts of past reformers and the growing consensus of the postwar era, as well. To him, expressways served a larger, greater purpose for the complete city. Accordingly, some neighborhoods might have to be sacrificed for progress of the whole. The ones that remained intact, or in some cases, reconstructed, would be stronger and better served, and the city would be stronger as a whole. It was that part of comprehensive planning that would arouse the most vocal protests coming from North St. Louis in the 1950s.

It was an engineering report that focused specifically on new expressways, however, that sparked the most controversy. Following years of in-depth traffic surveys and preliminary plans to build expressways in St. Louis, state engineers produced in 1951 the boldest and most precise expression of what would become St. Louis's expressway

[57] Rose, *Interstate*, 56-57.

system, the *Expressway Plan for the St. Louis and Adjacent Missouri Area*.[58] The plan, more commonly known as the Elliott Plan, in honor of its director, Colonel Malcolm Elliott of the Missouri Highway Commission, would serve both as a blueprint for St. Louis's transportation future and as a lightning rod for citizen debate and protest over the next few years.

Dubbed the "blueprints that will break [the] traffic bottleneck," by the *Globe-Democrat*,[59] the Elliott Plan called for three radial expressways connected to the central business district, located at the easternmost point of the city along the old center of the city's commercial activity, the Mississippi riverfront (see Figures 5 and 6). The expressways included the Ozark, which would traverse through south city and connect to U.S. Highway 66; the Boone, which would head directly west from downtown through the central corridor, an area that already possessed an older and shorter locally-funded express highway; and the Mark Twain, which would head north and northwest from downtown to Lambert Field airport and the Missouri River as well as connect with U.S. Highway 40. Though produced by engineers working for the State Highway Commission, the proposed expressway routes generally conformed, with modifications deemed appropriate by the engineers, to the guidelines set by the *Major Street Plan*, a result of the City Plan Commission's *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.[60]

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[58] Elliott, *Expressway Plan for St. Louis and Adjacent Missouri Area*. Hereafter cited as Elliott Plan.

[59] Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 1, 1953.

[60] Elliott Plan, 8-10; Primm, *Lion of the Valley* (p496), and Stein *St. Louis Politics* (p113) both incorrectly refer to the Ozark Expressway as I-44. The Elliott-proposed Ozark Expressway actually refers to the current I-55. This error is likely due in part to the number of proposed routes and subsequent changes between the *Comprehensive City Plan* in 1947 and actual construction years later. For instance, the Ozark was meant to turn and travel to the Missouri Ozarks as proposed by the Elliott Plan. But the expansion of federal funding in 1956 allowed the construction of another route, I-44, which would take the route to the Ozarks via US-66. The Elliott-proposed Ozark was then modified to take a directly southern route and

In detached technical language, the Elliott Plan methodically discussed the good and bad of the proposed expressways, and in doing so echoed common assumptions and motivations expressed by planners, business leaders, and politicians of the postwar era. "Detrimental factors" included possible property tax loss of $472,000 per year, out-migration from downtown and possible resulting blight, and barriers between "residential areas and schools, churches and local shopping areas"[61] Interestingly, considering that congestion was deemed a pressing problem by downtown business leaders and planners, the engineering report suggested that the expressways "should generate additional traffic which would tend to increase downtown congestion." In agreement with the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947, the Elliott Plan said that the new traffic could be offset

became I-55. Following the announcement of I-44, the I-55 stretch was renamed the Delta Expressway, but the name did caught on with the general public or policymakers.

[61] Elliott Plan, 53.

Figure 5: Artist's Rendering of Expressways. Looking Southwest. Downtown, where they converge, is at the bottom of the image. Notice the mostly undeveloped land in St. Louis County at top. Source: Elliott Plan.

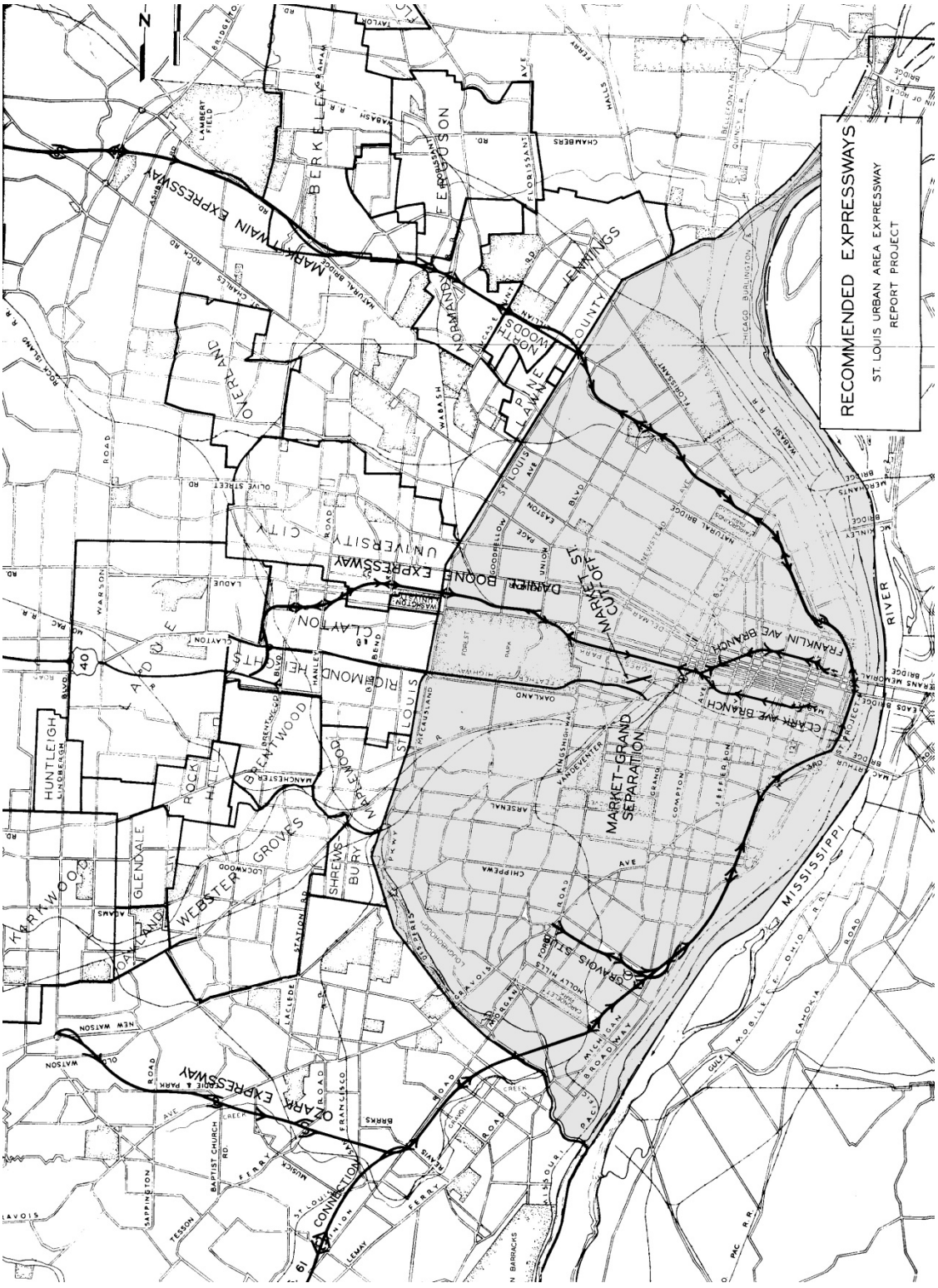

Figure 6: Expressways Link Downtown to St. Louis County. Source: Elliott Plan.

by providing "an enlarged and more logically located system of parking areas," at the perimeter of downtown and the availability of shuttle buses.[62]

The Elliott Plan claimed, however, that "the intangible detrimental factors . . . will be substantially less than the intangible benefits." First and foremost, travel time would be greatly reduced via the expressways. As a scientifically quantifiable result, it served as a crucial piece of the puzzle for the engineers. Other benefits included "light and air-space" and "improvement of the efficiency of mass-transportation facilities" such as expressway-ready buses, and removal "of blighting effect caused by the ever increasing congestion in downtown and midtown St. Louis," which, in agreement with business leaders, the report claimed resulted in a "radical depreciation of property values."[63]

Despite the presence of contextual information, raw numbers rather than comprehensive planning helped dictate the engineers' routing choices. Numbers of dwellings lost and especially cost were used to determine the best route for the Mark Twain Expressway through North St. Louis. Two alternates (designated A and B; see figure 7), plus a river route, were studied along with the recommended route. The Elliott Plan stated that the area from Fairgrounds Park southeast to downtown "was carefully studied with a view of selecting a location that would entail the least damage to property." Furthermore, "the choice depended on the element of cost, including, of course, minimizing disruption of business and displacement of families."[64] However, as

[62] Elliott Plan, 52-53.

[63] Ibid., 52.

[64] Ibid., 22-23.

figure 7 suggests, cost appeared to be the most important factor, as the definition of "disruption of business and displacement of families" appeared to be represented by total right-of-way costs.

	Miles	*Right-of-Way $*	*Construction $*	***Total $***
Recommended				
St. Louis County	12.7	1,450	14,616	16,111
City of St. Louis	7.2	12,779	19,525	33, 332
Total	19.9	14,229	34,141	49,443
A Route				
St. Louis County	14.4	1,703	20,184	21,887
City of St. Louis	7.4	13,722	21,065	34,787
Total	21.8	15,425	41,249	56,674
B Route				
St. Louis County	13.0	1,635	14,634	16,269
City of St. Louis	7.3	12,445	21,898	34,343
Total	20.3	14,080	36,532	50,612

Figure 7: Estimated Cost of Alternates - Mark Twain Expressway (In Thousands of Dollars). The "Recommended Route" was chosen in part because it was the shortest and the most affordable. Source: Elliott Plan, 23.

In this way, the engineering report was in step with similar plans made for other cities. The growing nationwide consensus on expressways left little doubt about what business and political leaders expected the engineers to produce. As Jeffrey Brown, who examined many different highway plans of the 1940s and 1950s, states, "It was easy to survey motorists and plot their travel desire lines on maps. Engineers quickly transformed these maps of desire lines into freeway routes."[65] The expressways proposed in the Elliott Plan generally conformed to desire lines representing the heaviest traffic flow in St. Louis (see Figure 8). In this sense, with the suburbs growing rapidly and Americans reaching them via automobile in greater numbers than ever before, engineers, while partly

[65] Jeffrey Brown, "A Tale of Two Visions," *Journal of Planning History* 4 (2005): 8.

accomplishing other goals advocated by planners, policymakers, and businessmen, were simply complementing what society had already decided.

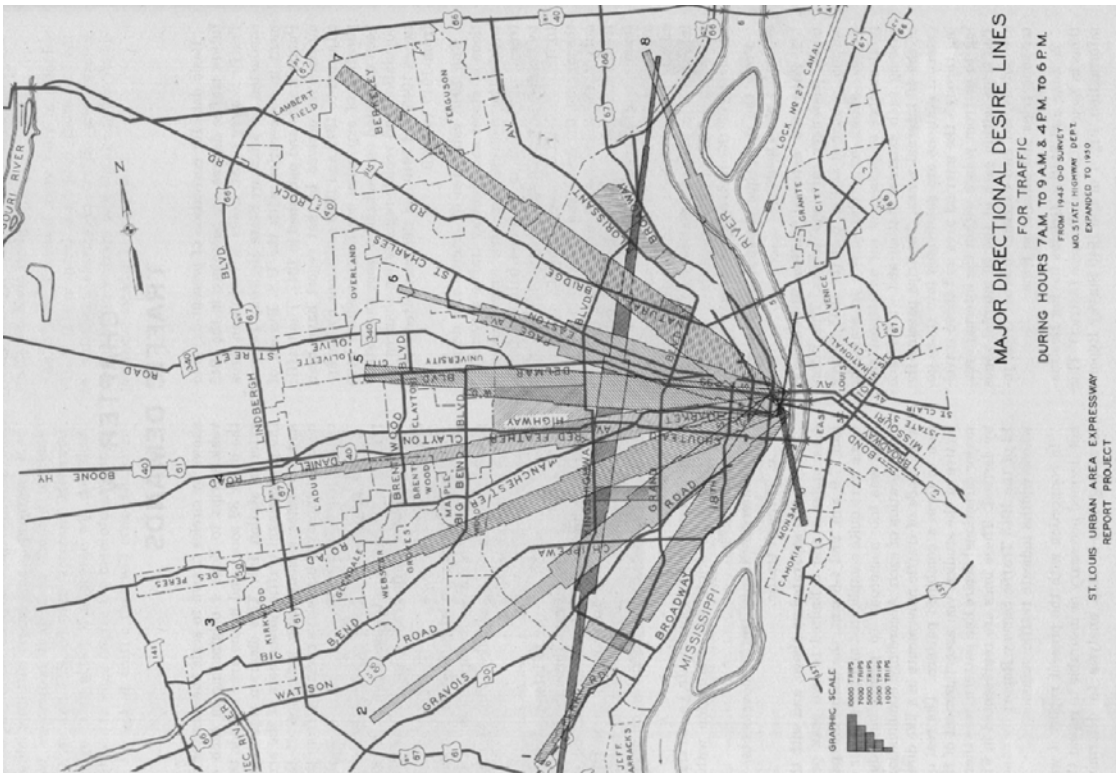

Figure 8: Desire Lines Used for Determining Expressway Routes.
Source: Elliot Plan.

But that perspective was not completely accurate. Urban neighborhoods containing huge populations still remained on the landscape, and their residents often conducted their lives without traveling along those desire lines. Those communities were much more complex than highway engineers—and even planners—recognized, and citizens in North St. Louis would spend the next three years reminding public officials downtown of that fact.

North St. Louis Neighborhoods: Fragmentation and Complexity

Complexities characterized North St. Louis, an area comprised of numerous communities that stood in the path of a proposed expressway. Housing in some areas near downtown was aged—in many cases older than 100 years—and not up to modern standards. While business investments in the central business district encouraged the demolition or upkeep of older structures as well as the construction of newer office buildings, no such investments were made in old neighborhoods surrounding downtown. On the other hand, housing in many areas especially in the northwest portion of the city was generally comprised of very new, single-family structures. Tenants dominated the city as a whole including the North Side, but homeownership was on the rise. Ethnic diversity was common but geographical and social separation of the different groups was common as well. Explicit racial segregation was illegal, but implicit racial segregation was a way of life to which residents strictly adhered. Influenced by years of political and social disconnection, residents looked to ward-based patronage politics to meet their needs, but they simultaneously wished city officials would live up to promises for locally-beneficial improvements. The neighborhoods also contained countless successful businesses that were wedged between a powerful downtown community and growing threats in the suburbs. In a sense, the neighborhoods of North Side mirrored those of most American cities in 1950—diverse, dense, and full of vitality, but also complex, self-interested, and subject to prevailing realities of the rest of the nation.

Defining a “neighborhood” or “community” can pose a particularly thorny problem, especially for the outsider who wishes to make an unfamiliar landscape comprehensible. Historian Eric Sandweiss suggests that communities, from one

perspective, are formed by the social interactions surrounding specific means of production and consumption, such as the construction of particular housing designs for particular uses. They are further defined and redefined, he suggests, by their spatial boundaries.[66] Common bonds within those boundaries, such as ethnicity, religion, and class reinforce identification. While those markers of community identity are constantly adjusting and transforming, persistent spatial boundaries such as streets or parks can prove useful for the outsider to study change over time.

Defining North St. Louis neighborhoods of the 1950s proves to be similarly complex. Social connections, such as religion, class, and ethnic heritage helped define those areas. Local history, common architecture, and the streets themselves also helped define neighborhoods, as well as their location in relation to other areas. In an interview years after the dramatic changes that would come in the mid-twentieth century, one lifelong resident recalled that "the North Side was the North Side and the South Side was the South Side."[67] That distinction, while still common if simplistic, likely had its roots in the physical and social separation of both of those areas from the older central part of the city. Its persistence suggests social dimensions still ascribed to places within the city's borders, just as was the case over a hundred years ago.[68]

Commonly a parish or a school was a good indication of how North Side residents defined the neighborhoods in which they lived. As historian John T. McGreevy notes, the geography and identification of Catholic parishes was "a distant echo of a rural Europe

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[66] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 141-142.

[67] John A Vignali interview by Holly Hughes. November 8, 2002, Old North St. Louis Restoration Group Archives.

[68] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 185.

where village and parish identities assumed primary importance" and united residents within their boundaries.[69] Those boundaries, not just common religion, helped define the communities therein."You'd go down from Holy Name to Holy Trinity, then over to St. Michael's and then down to St. Liborius to—that was the section you knew," reflected former resident Jim Longo. "Sacred Heart and St. Leo's and St. Bridget's and all that area," added Tom Franey.[70]

Defining the North Side based on commonly used names poses problems as well. For example, parts of Walnut Park located southwest of Calvary and Bellefontaine cemeteries are today called Mark Twain, and parts often defined as the northwestern section of Fairgrounds area are called Penrose. A general area for Hyde Park is usually agreed upon, but depending on what source one consults some parts of it may also be called College Hill, O'Fallon, Fairgrounds, or Montgomery. Old North St. Louis, to the south of Hyde Park, was known as Murphy-Blair in the 1950s and for most of the twentieth century, but its roots lie in the independent nineteenth century settlement of North St. Louis.

Reducing the complexities of individual urban neighborhoods can be challenging and, when done by outsiders, can lead to poor or inaccurate generalizations. Planners did so in the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947, as we shall see, and suggested that the city as a whole was made of definable pieces. As problematic as it can be to attempt to define those communities, doing so is necessary to separate the larger common threads from

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[69] John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 21.

[70] Both quoted in M.M. Costantin, *Sidestreets St. Louis* (St. Louis: Sidestreets Press, 1981), 43.

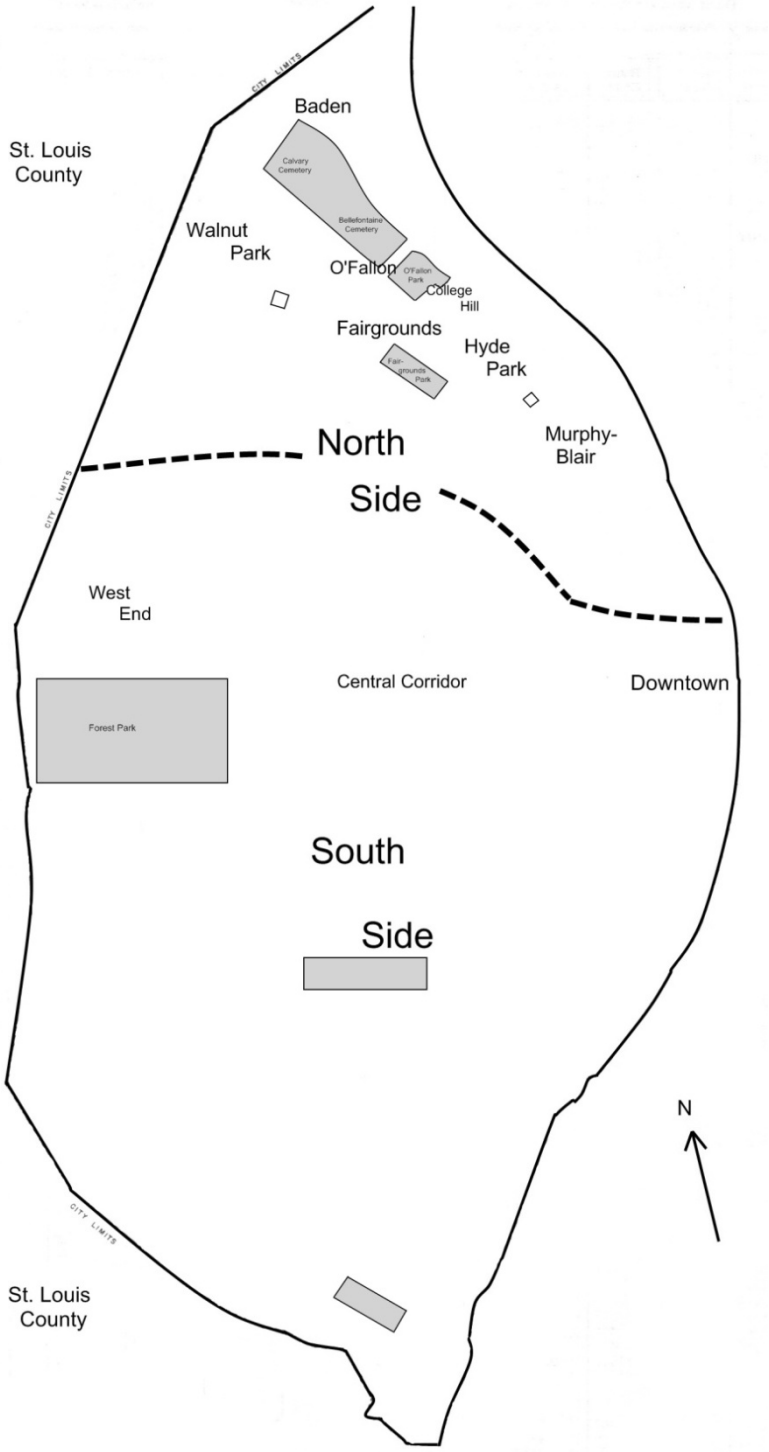

Figure 9: The City of St. Louis and the North Side, 1950s. The specific study area of this work is the area of the North Side north of the dashed line. Neighborhood names correspond to Community Development Agency's definitions from the 1970s with slight modifications. Map by author.

numerous competing motivations within North Side neighborhoods. By exploring the various histories of areas on the North Side, one can understand how the somewhat distinctive social, economic, and geographical circumstances of each area's development led to the larger area's collective opposition to expressways in the 1950s. Essentially, doing so is necessary to understand how the North Side's fenced-off corners became, if only temporarily, a larger and more inclusive fenced-off corner called North St. Louis. With those considerations in mind, this examination of St. Louis generally adheres to very basic neighborhood boundaries expressed in the 1970s by the St. Louis Community Development Agency, the successor to the City Plan Commission.[71] Amendments to these definitions are made when the source material from the 1950s demands more nuanced discussion (see figure 9). The CDA would produce much more detailed boundaries for "community areas" in the 1980s, but they are just as likely to contain inaccuracies based on one's perspective. Most importantly, they are too confined to effectively examine the history of the whole North Side, especially when the North Side itself is just a piece of the whole city of St. Louis.

Today when traveling on Interstate 70 north of downtown, one of the first neighborhoods drivers pass is the old town of North St. Louis. Founded in 1816 two miles north of the then-compact boundaries of St. Louis, the town was created with the goal of competing with and possibly overtaking the population and commercial dominance of the older settlement to the south. North St. Louis was purposely not developed with a grid conforming to St. Louis, but instead with a grid that corresponded with its geographical orientation and economic connection to the Mississippi River.

[71] Norbury Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods* (St. Louis: St. Louis Community Development Agency, 1978), http://stlouis.missouri.org/neighborhoods/history/.

Despite the hopes of early settlers, the town was in 1841 engulfed by the boundary expansion of its thriving neighbor. Large numbers of Germans immigrated to the United States and St. Louis spurred by the German Revolution of 1848, and by the 1860s Germans made up the largest ethnic group in the neighborhood. Over the next one hundred years numerous other nationalities and ethnic groups would use the neighborhood as a port of entry.[72]

By 1950, the old town of North St. Louis was commonly referred to as the neighborhood of Murphy-Blair. Having been founded earlier than most other neighborhoods in the city, the condition of Murphy-Blair's housing stock—some of St. Louis's oldest—set the neighborhood apart from other North Side neighborhoods. Many of the area's buildings were well over 100 years old, with 97 percent constructed prior to 1919, compared to roughly 70 percent for the city as whole. Seventy-four percent did not have private bathrooms and 26 percent did not have running water.[73]

The social and economic position of Murphy-Blair's residents defined the area as well. Although some residents lived in Murphy-Blair their whole lives, the area's low rents contributed to the neighborhood's use as a port of entry for new, generally poor residents. This not only included numerous ethnic groups, but also a relatively small number of African Americans and, by the 1940s, many rural Missourians and Southerners.[74] Renters occupied over 82 percent of the area's dwelling units. This

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[72] Miranda Rabus Rectenwald and Andrew Hurley, *From Village to Neighborhood: A History of Old North St. Louis* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2004), 20-28.

[73] U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Population: 1950, Volume III, Chapter 47: Census Tract Statistics: St. Louis, Missouri and Adjacent Areas* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952). Hereafter cited as 1950 Census.

[74] Rectenwald and Hurley, 31, 34; John A. Vignali interview by Holly Hughes, November 8, 2002, Old North St. Louis Oral History Project, Old North St. Louis Restoration Group Archives.

number was higher than other neighborhoods in this study, particularly those to the northwest such as Walnut Park,[75] and notably higher than for the city as a whole, which stood at about 64 percent renter occupied.[76]

Numerous schools and churches served the large population of children in the neighborhood. Public schools such as Webster School and Ames Kindergarten and Elementary School served white students, while the separate Dessalines School served black grade school age students. Numerous parish schools also populated the area, though no high schools, public or private were located in the neighborhood. Murphy-Blair residents prayed at different churches throughout the neighborhood, including Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, and Catholic, which often catered to various ethnic groups.[77]

Like the city as a whole, Murphy-Blair witnessed a population drop between 1930 and 1940, from 27,548 to 23,259**.** Like the city as a whole, the neighborhood's population increased modestly during the 1940s, adding only 242 residents for total of 23,503. Unlike the city as whole, the neighborhood contained fewer people in 1950 than in 1930.[78]

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[75] Jess M. Ulery, Jr., "Walnut Park: The Story of a Neighborhood," (unpublished paper, Washington University, May 27, 1970), 19, 21-22.

[76] Social Planning Council of St. Louis and St. Louis County, *1930 Federal Census for Metropolitan Saint Louis Tabulated by Enumeration Districts and Census Tracts* (St. Louis: The Council, 1932), hereafter cited as 1930 Census; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing, 1940, Population and Housing Statistics for Census Tracts, St. Louis Mo. and Adjacent Area* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942), hereafter cited as 1940 Census; 1950 Census. Statistics compiled by author.

[77] Rectenwald and Hurley, 37-52.

[78] 1930 Census; 1940 Census; 1950 Census. Statistics compiled by author.

Demographic analysis provides an interesting window on Murphy-Blair in the 1950s. Approximately 97 percent of the area's residents were white. Foreign-born residents made up a small portion of that number. The largest foreign-born contingents came from Italy, 283, and from Poland, 489, with many more ethnically-identified Polish Americans, which accounted for the large number of Polish parishes in the area. The African American population was higher than many North Side areas at 1,231 persons. Almost 77 percent of them resided within the tract closest to downtown, and the smallest number, a mere 83 persons or seven percent, lived in the tract to the north bordering the mostly white Hyde Park. Both tracts were roughly the same size in land area.[79]

Directly to the north of Murphy-Blair lies the neighborhood of Hyde Park. Originally platted by the Spanish as a land grant in the mid-eighteenth century, the area was incorporated as the town of Bremen in 1850. The settlement's name alluded to the German heritage of its early residents, who included Emil Mallinckrodt, father of the founders of Mallinckrodt Chemical Company, a long-time North Side industrial anchor. Like the town of North St. Louis, Bremen was geographically and economically connected to river, with many of the neighborhood's residents working in the many industries that populated the riverfront.[80]

Bremen serves as an early example of regional outlying open land development fostered by transportation improvements, as well as an example of how St. Louis was able to combat economic threats through annexation prior to the 1876 divorce. Bremen's

[79] 1950 Census. Statistics compiled by author. It is important to reiterate the difficulty of defining neighborhood boundaries. These numbers are not the definitive definition of Murphy-Blair demographics. They do, however, provide an accurate picture of the area's diversity.

[80] Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Hyde Park*; Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 197.

relative isolation from St. Louis diminished in 1845 when an omnibus line connected the two, effectively opening the area to further settlement and commercial activity. In 1850, just six years after incorporation, local voters and the state legislature approved St. Louis's annexation of Bremen. Rather than facing Bremen and North St. Louis as economic competitors, leaders in St. Louis instead brought them into the tax base. The former town of Bremen was now just a neighborhood of the city of St. Louis.[81]

Bremen, which came to be known commonly as Hyde Park for the park the neighborhood surrounded, grew rapidly after the annexation. Two architecturally-significant water towers, one made of white limestone and another made mostly of red brick, were built in northern portions of the neighborhood in the1870s and 1880s to serve the thousands of residents living there. Most residential structures were two- to-three-stories tall while some were one story, made of red brick, and built prior to 1900. Reflective of the density of the community and the primary modes of transportation of the era in which most structures there were built (walking and streetcars), houses were generally packed closely together and placed close to the street for easier accessibility.[82]

By the mid-twentieth century, population trends in the aging neighborhood varied. The population of tracts north of the park itself and near the water towers declined approximately five to eight percent between 1930 and 1940 and between four and five percent during the 1940s. Tracts south of the park also declined between 1930 and 1940, one losing three percent while another lost 742 persons, an 11.8 percent decline. Between 1940 and 1950, in line with the rest of the city, those two tracts regained some of that population, increasing by approximately three percent. As population slowly declined or

[81] Ibid.

[82] Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Hyde Park*.

stabilized, racial homogeneity increased, possibly because racial attitudes hardened as the communities aged. The African American population was generally higher in 1940 than in 1930, but by 1950 it had decreased below 1940 numbers and in some cases below 1930 numbers.[83]

While College Hill is often referred to as a separate neighborhood, its boundaries overlap with some definitions of Hyde Park. Located in the north portion of the Hyde Park area, its name comes from the site of the Saint Louis University farm and often is described as containing the large O'Fallon Park to the north. Much of this area's housing stock is similar to the rest of Hyde Park, if in some cases younger. Most buildings were constructed between 1880 and 1920, made of brick, and contained dwellings for two to four families.[84]

To the west of Hyde Park and College Hill, the Fairgrounds area is so-named because of Fairgrounds Park, site St. Louis's annual fair until the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition was held in Forest Park. Like the Hyde Park neighborhood, transit developments led to subdividing in the Fairgrounds area. In 1950, housing stock in the area varied, with areas north and south of the park built before 1920, many of which were multi-family brick structures. To the northwest, however, most of the residential structures were single-family newer homes built in the 1920s and 1930s.[85] Of note, areas in the northwestern part of Fairgrounds are often referred to as the O'Fallon neighborhood.

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[83] 1930 Census; 1940 Census; 1950 Census.

[84] Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Bissell-College Hill*.

[85] Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Fairgrounds*.

By the 1950s, the populations of the Fairgrounds-O'Fallon-College Hill areas were in decline. Every census for those areas showed population losses between 1930 and 1940, and again between 1940 and 1950. Decline was relatively small, however, generally between two and five percent for each census tract. One area posted an 8.2 percent decline, while a less populated tract lost up to 16 percent of its residents.[86]

Farther to the northwest but south of the immense Calvary and Bellefontaine cemeteries, the neighborhood of Walnut Park was developed decades after other North Side areas closer to downtown. The area witnessed some of the last examples of open land development in the city, but also typified the city's heavy industrial past.[87] The area first experienced an influx of German Protestants primarily from the Hyde Park area in the 1890s, beginning a build-up of residential structures that would continue during the first half of the twentieth century. In the early 1900s, a new railroad line through the area opened it to heavy industrial activity and the workers needed to fuel it. For the next fifty years, the area's farmland was rapidly subdivided into numerous residential tracts to house the influx of new residents who took advantage of the area's industrial work opportunities.[88] These working-class residents bought or built homes, which in the Walnut Park area were more likely than in many areas of North St. Louis to be single-family structures.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the composition of the Walnut Park population shifted from Protestant to Catholic. The settlement in the neighborhood of

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[86] 1930 Census, 1940 Census, 1950 Census. Tract with 8.2 percent decline between 1940 and 1950 lost 489 of its 5,989 residents; tract with 16 percent decline between 1940 and 1950 lost 160 of its relatively less 997 residents.

[87] Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Walnut Park.*

[88] Ibid.

ethnically-identified groups other than Germans, such as Croatians, Irish, Italians, and Poles, contributed to this change, as did the formation of their own churches.[89] For example, St. Adalbert's Catholic Church was built to serve the local Polish-American population.

By the 1950s, commerce and industry thrived in Walnut Park. The neighborhood had three large commercial districts and two lesser ones in the first half of the twentieth century. Florissant Avenue, for example, served as a thriving hub of local retail activity. All kinds of businesses lined this thoroughfare that bordered the city's huge cemeteries and extended to others areas. Vital industrial activity in the neighborhood's eastern section and just to the south provided jobs to many of Walnut Park's residents. These businesses included machinery, flour mills and, during World War II, munitions. Chevrolets were produced at a large plant in the area south of Bircher Boulevard, a major east-west thoroughfare, as well. These companies also attracted a substantial number of newcomers, necessitating the development of new land. In 1950, after fifty years of rapid residential development, the last subdivision in Walnut Park, Norwich Place, was built on some of the last open land available in the city of St. Louis, just as the great suburban migration was gaining steam.[90]

Population patterns over the previous two decades, though slightly uneven, confirm the health of Walnut Park. For instance, between 1930 and 1940 a few areas had witnessed growth of between 200 and 300 persons, while two other census tracts had lost a similar number of residents. In the next decade, some tracts would gain a small number

[89] Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Walnut Park.*

[90] Ibid.

of residents, while others would lose just a few, not exceeding five percent of their previous census totals. The portion of the neighborhood nearest to the city-county border showed the most significant changes. Between 1930 and 1940, the area grew by 23.5 percent, and by 13.5 percent in the next decade. These numbers suggest that while Walnut Park was not growing significantly as a whole, it was growing quickly on the western edge, where some of the city's last open land had been or would soon be subdivided.[91]

The last neighborhood within this study's focus, Baden, a community in extreme North St. Louis that borders the Mississippi River and extends south to the cemeteries, would play a role in the 1950s expressway debate despite lying outside the proposed right-of-way. Baden's approximately 400 residents, mostly of German descent, became citizens of St. Louis with the 1876 expansion of the city limits. Population of the neighborhood, the northernmost in the city, expanded during the twentieth century and social institutions such as churches and schools filled the area. Residentially, the area consisted mostly of single family homes, with the last subdivision built in 1948.[92]

Like Walnut Park, Baden symbolically and in many cases literally served as a last stop within the city limits before the St. Louis County suburbs. Noting the construction of new five-room bungalows in the area, the *West Florissant News* (an off-shoot of the North Side-published *Community News*) said Baden was "the fastest growing community in the center of the city" as early as the 1930s.[93] Broadway and Riverview Boulevard

[91] 1930 Census; 1940 Census; 1950 Census. Statistics compiled by author.

[92] Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Baden-Riverview*.

[93] "See the Newest Sub-Division in North St. Louis," *West Florissant News*, April 4, 1931.

served as a commercial area, and some industrial activity could be found in the area, including St. Louis [street] Car Company.[94]

Between 1930 and 1950, Baden witnessed population gains in most census tracts. Nearly all of the growth occurred at the center and in the northern portion of the neighborhood near the city limits. Areas in the southern portion and those near the river showed no significant growth or decline in the twenty-year period, suggesting a stabilization of population in those areas. Two of those stabilized areas mirrored the slight decline in 1940 and increase in 1950 witnessed by the city as a whole. Contrasting with many neighborhoods such as Murphy-Blair and Hyde Park, of the 3,966 dwellings units in the area, nearly 69 percent were owner-occupied.[95]

Taken as a whole, North Side population trends were uneven by 1950. Population loss occurred mainly in old neighborhoods such Hyde Park, but the even older Murphy-Blair, likely due to its largely transient population base which fluctuated with larger economic trends, witnessed a relatively small gain reflective of the city as a whole. These neighborhoods tended to contain older housing stock and residents earning lower incomes. Smaller population drops were witnessed in working-class areas such as Fairgrounds and parts of Walnut Park. Most growth occurred in newer residential tracts near the city-county border found in parts of Walnut Park and Baden. Most areas described were nearly one hundred percent white.

The neighborhoods of North St. Louis were distinctive from one another in numerous ways. Different historical circumstances of each area helped define their spatial

[94] Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Baden-Riverview*.

[95] 1930 Census; 1940 Census; 1950 Census. Statistics compiled by author.

and social make-up in 1950, which usually was quite different from downtown or the West End. Along with the possibility of losing one's home, business, school, or church, it was that separateness—from each other, but especially from the influential business and planning interests in downtown—that led them to find unity in fighting the expressway.

The city as a whole was led by the mayor. In 1950, that man was Joseph Darst. Darst, a former head of the Federal Housing Administration, worked with planners for a complete overhaul of St. Louis. While better housing was one of his chief goals, he also advocated the construction of an expressway system. In the late 1940s, he fought to build the precursor to the Mark Twain and Ozark expressways, the Third Street Highway, and proved to be a determined force that fought the locally-focused ward leaders who opposed such projects.

By partitioning the city into 28 distinct wards, politicians fragmented the North Side even further. This fragmented system had been in place since the 1876 charter, and had its roots in the ethnic diversity of the city. In an attempt to address—and by some perspectives contain—the power of many growing groups in the city, the charter allowed each area equal representation by creating individual ward boundaries.

As primary facilitators of the patronage system, ward committeemen became the most powerful local leaders. They alone decided who ran for alderman, state representative, and St. Louis "county" offices such as sheriff from their party. Like their counterparts in other cities such as Chicago and New York before civil service reform, the committeemen also procured jobs for loyal citizens. This helped make the patronage system especially important in urban areas with large ethnic populations. Because of their inability to speak English, their lack of occupational skills, or the bigotry of the

American-born population, immigrants and their children often faced barriers to employment and access to social and political institutions. By participating in patronage politics, those citizens could get a job, a home, and move up the economic and social ladder.[96]

By the 1950s, committeemen were supplanted by aldermen as the primary leaders of St. Louis's wards. The industrial decline of the city and the institution of civil service had done much to weaken the power of the committeemen.[97] Charter reforms passed over the preceding decades played roles as well. The reforms stipulated aldermen would be elected from their wards alone and not at-large as they had been previously. According to historian James Neal Primm, patronage was too well entrenched to be completely silenced by reforms, and politics in St. Louis would display characteristics of its legacy, with committeemen continuing to provide jobs. The local alderman, however, had become the primary local leader.

While powerful within their own ward boundaries, individual aldermen were less powerful outside them. Taken as a group, the Board of Aldermen, with an elected aldermanic president, was a force often more formidable than the city's mayor. With 28 wards, the number fixed since the 1876 divorce, aldermen ensured that residents would have a local voice to address local problems, or even stall or stop non-local leaders from influencing issues within their respective wards. Because the aldermen needed votes to stay in office and the people needed aldermen for their voices to be heard, aldermen and the neighborhoods they represented possessed a symbiotic relationship.

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[96] Stein, *St. Louis Politics*,64-66.

[97] Ibid., 64, 99.

Nonetheless, despite the increased power of the aldermen, politics that made the individual ward stronger than the city as a whole had weakened in St. Louis by the 1950s. With a consensus on highways and urban areas growing throughout the country, local leaders would be forced increasingly to look beyond their borders and accept plans made by others for projects within those borders. Years of community fragmentation and traditional ward politics would prove to be a double-edged sword for the North Side. On the one hand, their way of conducting political business would force changes from downtown leaders. As centers of power for individual sections of the city, they provided a means by which local citizens' needs could be addressed. They also provided a small, but often effective, means to combat the wealthier and more influential interests in the city. For that reason, wards and their aldermen would play a prominent role in determining the routes of expressways in the city. On the other hand, the aldermen's narrow focus on often just one section of a 28-piece puzzle would also hinder them from achieving their ultimate goals. Figure 10 shows how the North Side was divided into distinct wards.

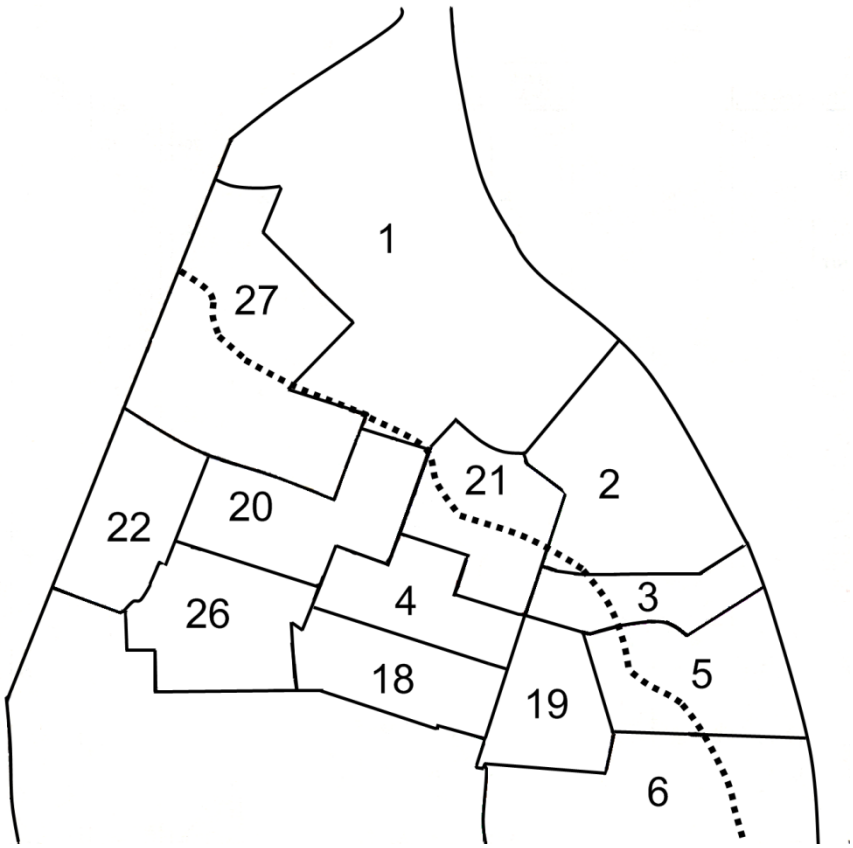

Figure 10: North Side Wards. Approximate location of Elliott route represented by dashed line. Map by author.

In the 1950s, policymakers in downtown felt the future well-being of the whole city of St. Louis depended on the construction of expressways and other civic improvements. The city had grown quickly, but was showing signs of decline. Grand plans in the form of the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947 and the State Highway Commission's Elliott Plan were created to help downtown keep up with the suburbs and help the St. Louis region keep up with the rest of the country. If expressways were not undertaken, many believed, neither of those goals would be accomplished and the situation in St. Louis would only worsen.

Citizens that populated the city's North Side held a more complicated perspective. While they advocated the common good and supported "progress" in general and many

civic projects, they also espoused loyalty to their homes and local communities. Compared with the “wider setting,” they dealt with economics and politics on a relatively small scale. Social networks typically spanned only throughout a particular neighborhood, parish, or block. Practically every need was met nearby. The neighborhood, for many, was one’s whole world, which many would defend despite its supposed liabilities. It was ultimately that disconnection in perspective —between local interests and downtown interests advocating the civic whole—that made the North Side neighborhoods more vulnerable to proposals made in downtown and the consensus those decisions reinforced.

Chapter II

Beneath the Expressway:
The Racial Subtext of Expressway Planning and Protest in St. Louis

In October 1952, the Northwest Improvement and Protective Association, led by Russell E. Schmitt, and the O'Fallon Park Improvement Association, led by Fred A. Niemoller, sponsored a meeting at St. Englebert's Catholic Church, a huge brick structure located in the northwestern section of the Fairgrounds area. A previous meeting in September had drawn a crowd that the locally published *North St. Louis Community News* described as a "turn-away throng, surpassing all expectations of the protesting organization." Another huge crowd attended the October meeting, and speakers from the improvement associations spoke to concerns of many North Side residents regarding plans that had swiftly developed in downtown and in the media in the last year.[1]

The meetings in the fall of 1952 are the first recorded protests of plans for the Mark Twain Expressway in North St. Louis. They were also the first known examples of organized opposition to a major civic project by community groups in St. Louis. The significance of the location was likely not lost on those who attended, as the 60-year-old traditionally German church itself would lie directly next to the right-of-way. The North

[1] *North St. Louis Community News*, "North St. Louis Groups to Fight Highway Plan," October 22, 1952. The *Community News* generally reported the neighborhood groups' names consistently, but occasionally there were variations. Sometimes, for instance, the Northwest Improvement and Protective Association would simply be the Northwest Improvement Association, or the O'Fallon group would also be called a "Protective" association. In the case of the Northwest group, official stationary says it is "Improvement" only. However, it is unclear if the names of the other groups were printed as result of a journalistic error or the names of the groups actually changed. Where appropriate, the author will refer to the groups as they were reported at a particular time.

Side had always existed in a state of constant if imperceptible change. The proposed expressway could spur many more changes, ones which residents deemed uncontrollable, if it were built.[2]

Sorting out why North Side groups fought the expressway is a complex problem, but North St. Louis was a complex place. On the one hand, parts of the North Side were booming. Builders were still filling with new residences what little space the city had left within its frozen 61 square miles, especially in the extreme southwestern and northwestern portions of the city. Norwich Place, the newest subdivision in Walnut Park, was completed in 1950, and plans for new houses were still under consideration by developers until the Elliott Plan announcement in 1951, as well.[3] Highlighting this continued growth and the large number of homes that would have to be demolished if the expressway were built as proposed, Russell E. Schmitt, president of the Northwest Improvement and Protective Association, stated that "some residences were established as recent as the past two years."[4] Schmitt and the Northwest Improvement Association were protecting their investments in the city, the homes built by themselves and their neighbors in the community, as they had since at least the 1930s. The northwest St. Louis boom was one reason homeowners opposed the expressway plans, as evidenced by one of the first groups to join the Northwest and O'Fallon organizations, the Walnut Park Improvement Association, led by Walter Neumann. The association, which represented

[2] Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Fairgrounds*; see also Elliott Plan.

[3] "Expressway Mass Meeting at Beaumont Feb. 16," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 4, 1953.The first tracts of land were acquired in the city and included 18 lots from a "real estate dealer who planned to build homes on it."

[4] "North St. Louis Groups to Fight Highway Plan," *North St. Louis Community News*, October 22, 1952.

one of the fastest growing areas in the city, held its own meeting in protest of the planned Mark Twain Expressway route in November.[5]

On the other hand, the North Side continually faced anxiety, and an expressway would only cause more problems. For example, past residents of North St. Louis would be dishonored if the expressway were constructed as proposed because several trees planted for local residents killed in World War I would have to be removed.[6] More importantly, some neighborhoods, such as the O'Fallon, Fairgrounds, and Hyde Park areas, had slowly been losing residents over the last ten years. Memories of the postwar housing crisis had not completely dissipated, either. Though conditions had improved in recent years, ads placed in the *Community News* by desperate prospective tenants vastly outnumbered ads for available residences just a couple of years earlier.[7] "The housing problem is bad now, but it will be even worse if these homes are torn down," Schmitt said. "Thousands of city residents will be forced from their homes," and at the cost of property plus ten percent, homeowners would not get enough money to purchase new property.[8] No neighborhood showed the complexity of the North Side argument—with both optimism and anxiety—more clearly than Walnut Park, which was growing in some sections, but losing residents in others.

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[5] "Walnut Park Improvement Ass'n Protest Meeting Tonight," *North St. Louis Community News*, November 12, 1952.

[6] "North Side Group Voices Disapproval Of Highway Plan," *North St. Louis Community News*, December 10, 1952.

[7] "Housing Conditions Are Critical Here," *North St. Louis Community News*, January 3, 1946 and "For Rent" and "Wanted to Rent" sections, *North St. Louis Community News*, January 10, 1946, 8.

[8] "Expressway Mass Meeting at Beaumont Feb. 16," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 4, 1953.

One's opinion of the expressway could lead to different questions and conclusions. Could an expressway encourage population stability and spur economic growth? Or would it simply make existing problems worse? As the first protest meetings highlight, the consensus leaned toward the latter. The Mark Twain Expressway, many North Side residents feared, would have effects more negative and wide-reaching than simply faster travel times to downtown and the relief of traffic congestion. Future meetings would highlight those fears, fears that lay at the heart of expressway planning and its primary opponents, neighborhood improvement associations.

Just as importantly, past actions by those associations provide evidence as to the underlying motivations of those groups. Neighborhood improvement, protective, and homeowners associations provided the means for North St. Louisans to fight for their residences—be it to acquire services, to beautify their surroundings, to exclude unwanted groups, or to move an expressway. Throughout their history in the city to the 1950s, their tactics adapted to changing times, but their goals remained rooted in protecting their neighborhoods both physically and socially.

While St. Louis's fragmented social and political culture, and the rhetoric that accompanied it, had planted the seeds of division concerning large civic projects and expressway politics, decades of explicitly racist housing policies had ensured the racial homogeneity of North St. Louis neighborhoods. But when those barriers were broken, white residents expressed fear that the racial composition and thus the quality of their neighborhoods would change rapidly. At expressway protest meetings held in fraternal halls, high schools, and churches, improvement associations would draw on implicit local fears of racial residential integration and a resulting decline of property values. These

long engrained fears rested beneath the open public dialogue, but were such a part of St. Louis and American society that the seemingly unrelated expressway added a degree of intensity to protesting arguments. Furthermore, the city's planners, policymakers, and business community, as well as the federal government, stirred those fears with increasingly euphemistic official designations and rhetoric, emphasizing that there was more to planning and fighting the Mark Twain Expressway than what was expressed on the surface.

Neighborhood Associations, Parishes, and Race in Early Twentieth Century St. Louis

The expressway was not the first issue neighborhood improvement associations in North St. Louis tackled. Improvement associations were often born out of the physical fragmentation of the city. Developed outside of downtown and, for the most part, the wealthy enclaves of the city, North Side neighborhoods, especially those farther from downtown, lacked essential services promised by the 1876 charter for years after their residential build-up. While residents in West End could afford to privatize their streets and pay for infrastructure projects,[9] residents in working- and middle-class neighborhoods formed neighborhood associations to acquire those services. For example, in 1906 residents formed the Walnut Park Improvement Association to lobby for needed services in the area.[10]

These homeowners, improvement, and protective associations, as they were variously called, served as effective structures through which those goals could be

[9] David T. Beito, "The Private Places of St. Louis: Urban Infrastructure through Private Planning," in *The Voluntary City: Choice, Community, and Civil Society*, ed. David T. Beito, Peter Gordon, and Alexander Tabarrok (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), 47-73.

[10] Jess M. Ulery, Jr. "Walnut Park: The Story of a Neighborhood," unpublished paper, Washington University, 1970, 30.

accomplished amid the fragmented nature of St. Louis politics and society. Like aldermen, they provided a means by which the concerns of a fenced-off corner could be articulated and, hopefully, addressed. "The back-bone of every neighborhood is the association that functions therein," stated an editorial in the *North-West Civic News* in 1930, a publication of the North-West St. Louis Improvement Association (later the Northwest Improvement and Protective Association). "The association is the watch-dog of your interests in your locality. If it is a poor association, one which is inefficient in its purpose and performance of works, then the neighborhood will so indicate by its condition and lack of progress and improvement." Appropriating language widely used in St. Louis as well as in national political discourse, the common good was to be held above all, and the neighborhood association helped lead to that end. "In the nature of civic work, we all benefit or profit by what others do," stated the editorial. "Are we so extremely selfish, so indifferent that we will not do something that will signify our approval and support of what is being done for our advantage?"[11]

Membership and resulting participation in these groups did not necessarily coincide, providing an indication of the improvement associations' organizational structure and political power. Defined by geographic boundaries, membership in North St. Louis neighborhood associations was generally 100 percent. Active involvement, though, was very low, usually left to businessmen, developers, realtors, and politicians,[12] likely due to their vested interests. The cost of dues, often one dollar, requested but not

[11] *North-West Civic News,* Vol. II, No. 9, October 23, 1930, 5.

[12] Robert Fisher, *Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 73.

required by several groups may have scared off poorer residents as well, though at times all neighborhood residents were encouraged to attend meetings.

This low-level participation served as a common pressure point within some groups. For example, in 1931, while praising successes of the Baden Patrons Association over the previous six years—which included a new public library branch and fundraising for the annual picnic—one leader of the group felt the need to respond to "charges that the organization is run by only a few people." His response: 80 percent of the group's members never show up to meetings.[13]

When outside forces threatened one's neighborhood, though, citizens took a more active stance and attended meetings. Starting in 1951, involvement in neighborhood improvement and protective associations spiked when many North St. Louis residents felt threatened by the possible effects of the proposed Mark Twain Expressway. Still, according to one member, leaders felt "handicapped because of the laxity of the people," as the fight would drag on in the following years. In his view, the associations "need more members and more help."[14]

The stabilization of property values served as an explicit focus of improvement and protective associations; therefore it is not surprising that many expressed exclusionary characteristics, first explicitly and then, when necessary to meet their goals, implicitly. As more and more African Americans began to move into urban areas, working-class whites acted on their fears and either modified the zoning, parking, and social event planning objectives of earlier neighborhood groups or formed new

[13] *Baden News,* August 29, 1931. Published by the *Community News*.

[14] *North St. Louis Community News*, February 16, 1955.

improvement and protection associations in many midwestern cities. Espousing "homeowners' rights," working-class men, women, and children used differing levels of violence and legal action to block or discourage black settlement in their residential areas.[15]

Racially-based residential segregation was viewed by proponents as a solution to black migration to urban areas. Between 1910 and 1940, as rural black Southerners migrated to midwestern and northeastern cities for industrial jobs and created new sources of competition for whites, especially immigrants and their descendents. In 1910, the black population of St. Louis stood at 43,960. By 1920 that number would increase 60 percent to 69,854, making up 9 percent of the city's population.[16] In St. Louis, many settled in areas on the near North Side and the Mill Creek Valley in the central corridor. Between 1900 and 1930 St. Louis was one of the four U.S. cities—a group that included Chicago, Milwaukee, and Cleveland—in which neighborhoods were segregated most rapidly to deal with the influx of black residents.[17]

In parts of St. Louis society other than residential settlement, the pattern of segregation was uneven. Historian James Neal Primm notes that black citizens were not allowed in white restaurants, schools, and barber shops, while libraries, department stores, and theaters were open to them but sometimes contained separate facilities. Segregation on streetcars was not codified or enforced but was instead mostly carried out

[15] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 211-258.

[16] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 436, 441.

[17] John E. Farley, "Racial Housing Segregation in the St. Louis Area: Past, Present, and Future," in Brady Baybeck and E. Terrence Jones, *St. Louis Metromorphosis: Past Trends and Future Directions* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2004), 200-201.

by choice of white individuals, who would rather move to another seat than sit next to an African American.[18]

While the pattern of segregation may have been uneven in other parts of St. Louis society, many white leaders made it clear that no such concessions could be made when it came to their homes and neighborhoods. Accordingly, voters considered a proposed ordinance in 1916 that would legalize residential segregation within the city limits, specifically designating white and black areas of settlement.[19] The proposed ordinance stipulated that crossover of one race into another race's residential territory would be illegal. Members of the city's white community were divided on the ordinance, but according to St. Louis historian James Neal Primm, many groups, such as the city's Polish American organizations (no doubt representing many North Side residents) saw it as a source of white racial pride and patriotism. Downtown policymakers generally opposed it.[20] In fact, Republican Mayor Henry Kiel and many aldermen openly opposed the measure, as African Americans were a dependable base of support for Republicans.[21] Fearing that demographic shifts would threaten local property values, neighborhood improvement and protective associations led the fight in support of the measure.[22]

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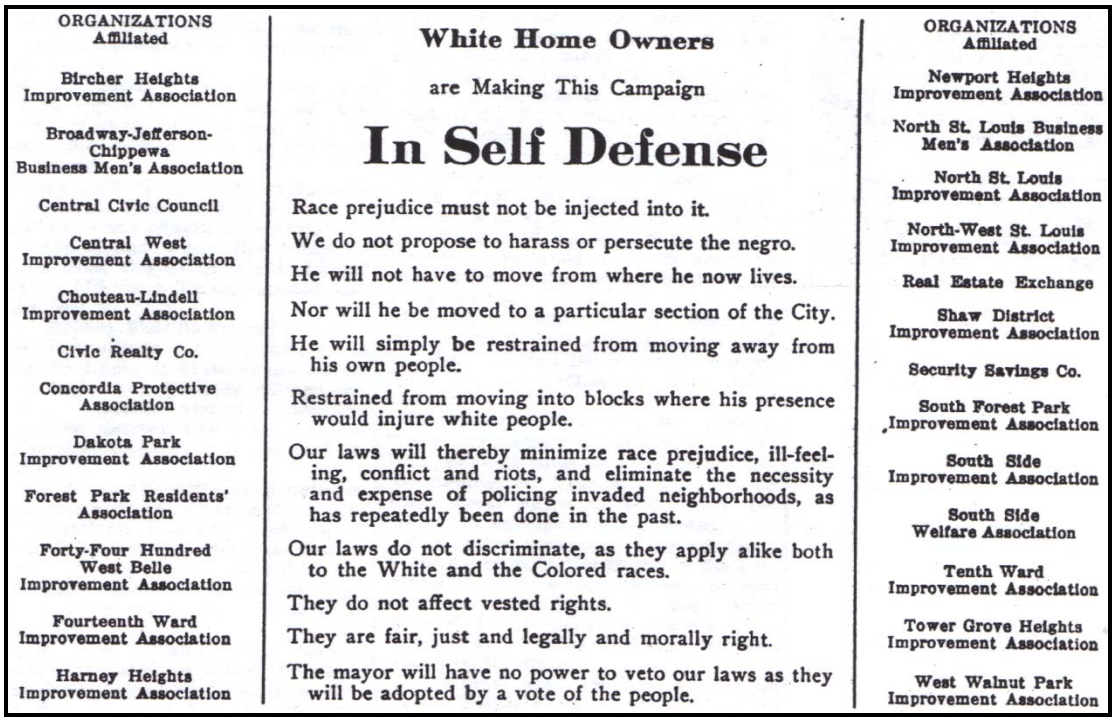
[18] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 436.

[19] "2 Improvement Clubs Unanimously Indorse Segregation Ordinance," *St. Louis Republic*, February 21, 1916. See also, Daniel Kelleher, "St. Louis' 1916 Residential Segregation Ordinance," *Bulletin of the Missouri Historical Society* 26 (1970): 239-248.

[20] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 438.

[21] *St. Louis Republic*, March 1, 1916.

[22] On the nationwide trend of forming neighborhood improvement associations for racial exclusion and its effects, see Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 35.



ORGANIZATIONS
Affiliated

Bircher Heights Improvement Association

Broadway-Jefferson-Chippewa Business Men's Association

Central Civic Council

Central West Improvement Association

Chouteau-Lindell Improvement Association

Civic Realty Co.

Concordia Protective Association

Dakota Park Improvement Association

Forest Park Residents' Association

Forty-Four Hundred West Belle Improvement Association

Fourteenth Ward Improvement Association

Harney Heights Improvement Association

White Home Owners

are Making This Campaign

In Self Defense

Race prejudice must not be injected into it.

We do not propose to harass or persecute the negro.

He will not have to move from where he now lives.

Nor will he be moved to a particular section of the City.

He will simply be restrained from moving away from his own people.

Restrained from moving into blocks where his presence would injure white people.

Our laws will thereby minimize race prejudice, ill-feeling, conflict and riots, and eliminate the necessity and expense of policing invaded neighborhoods, as has repeatedly been done in the past.

Our laws do not discriminate, as they apply alike both to the White and the Colored races.

They do not affect vested rights.

They are fair, just and legally and morally right.

The mayor will have no power to veto our laws as they will be adopted by a vote of the people.

ORGANIZATIONS
Affiliated

Newport Heights Improvement Association

North St. Louis Business Men's Association

North St. Louis Improvement Association

North-West St. Louis Improvement Association

Real Estate Exchange

Shaw District Improvement Association

Security Savings Co.

South Forest Park Improvement Association

South Side Improvement Association

South Side Welfare Association

Tenth Ward Improvement Association

Tower Grove Heights Improvement Association

West Walnut Park Improvement Association

Figure 1: Notice of the United Welfare Association produced during the residential segregation ordinance debate. Source: *St. Louis Segregation Scrapbook* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society).

Altogether, 25 improvement, protective, and business associations from across the North and South Sides and the West End joined to form the United Welfare Association "to secure the enactment of an ordinance that will prevent further invasion of white resident neighborhoods by negroes and vice versa." For their part, the North St. Louis, North-West St. Louis, West Walnut Park, Harney Heights, and Bircher Heights improvement associations represented concerned residents of relatively new residential tracts on North Side in support of the ordinance and fed fears of decreased property values due to possible racial influx (see figure 1).[23]

Adding the "vice versa" served to deflect accusations of racial prejudice away from the UWA. Under the ordinance, white St. Louisans would not be allowed to move

[23] Letter, United Welfare Association to Pinkas Subovitz, date unknown. St. Louis Segregation Scrapbook, Missouri Historical Society, p. 158.

to districts populated predominantly by African Americans. This would supposedly benefit both races by reducing prejudice and violence. Primm indirectly highlights this viewpoint when he notes that one pastor of a Catholic parish for blacks favored segregation.[24] In that sense, UWA members claimed they did not feel threatened by the "Colored Invasion," but instead worried that the "value and desirability of…property for white residential occupation" was at risk.[25]

Protection of homeownership and property values thus were central to the United Welfare Association's goals. In a push to raise awareness of its cause, the UWA relayed a hypothetical example of what white St. Louis could face if measures were not taken. "Mrs. Boaz owns her home; paying for it on installments; she has been the sole support of her family; this home of hers is practically her all," wrote the UWA. Now that a black family has moved next door, the home's value "is cut right in half; its desirability is destroyed" leaving her "helpless." Whether or not readers experienced the same problem, they, like numerous other white homeowners, did not "know what day or what minute [they] may wake up to find [themselves and their community] in the midst of a negro settlement."[26]

Not only would individual property be ruined, but city taxes would rise as a result, touching on another consistent fear expressed by neighborhood associations through mid-century. "Just remember! whether the negro moves next door or not, your property is hit just the same," continued the letter. "Every dollar of tax taken off of property injured by

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[24] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 438.

[25] *St. Louis Republic*, March 1, 1916.

[26] Letter, United Welfare Association to Pinkas Subovitz, probably 1916. St. Louis Segregation Scrapbook, Missouri Historical Society, p. 158.

negro invasion must be made up […] by being assessed against all other property, to equalize the City returns." By removing tax dollars needed for the local improvements for which the associations typically worked, declining property values thus degraded not only the neighborhood, but the civic whole as well. The case presented by the UWA was clear. "Think of these things—and act!"[27]

The United Welfare Association's efforts were effective, but not necessarily surprising. They simply reflected the wider reach of racism in St. Louis and the degree to which the city was already residentially segregated. In early 1916, St. Louisans overwhelmingly approved the ordinance with 52,220 votes for and only 17,877 votes against. African Americans made up 9,846 of registered city voters, and approximately one-half of registered voters cast ballots. Support for the ordinance transcended party lines and received majorities in 25 of the 28 wards, with some of the largest majorities coming from North Side wards.[28]

Only one North Side ward, the fifth, which contains Murphy-Blair, defeated the measure. However, the vote was much closer than in almost any other ward in the city, with 516 "yes" votes and 884 "no" votes. This result can be attributed to Democratic State Senator Michael Kinney who "promised the negroes to deliver the ward against the segregation ordinance." Highlighting how whites mostly voted in favor of the ordinance while blacks mostly voted against it, only one out of 81 votes was cast in favor of the ordinance in one particularly "large negro precinct" in Kinney's ward. Republicans failed to deliver on promises to defeat the ordinance, enraging the local African American

[27] Letter, United Welfare Association to Pinkas Subovitz, probably 1916. St. Louis Segregation Scrapbook, Missouri Historical Society, p. 158.

[28] *St. Louis Republic*, March 1, 1916.

community.[29] Figure 2 shows areas designated by the ordinance as approved for black settlement.

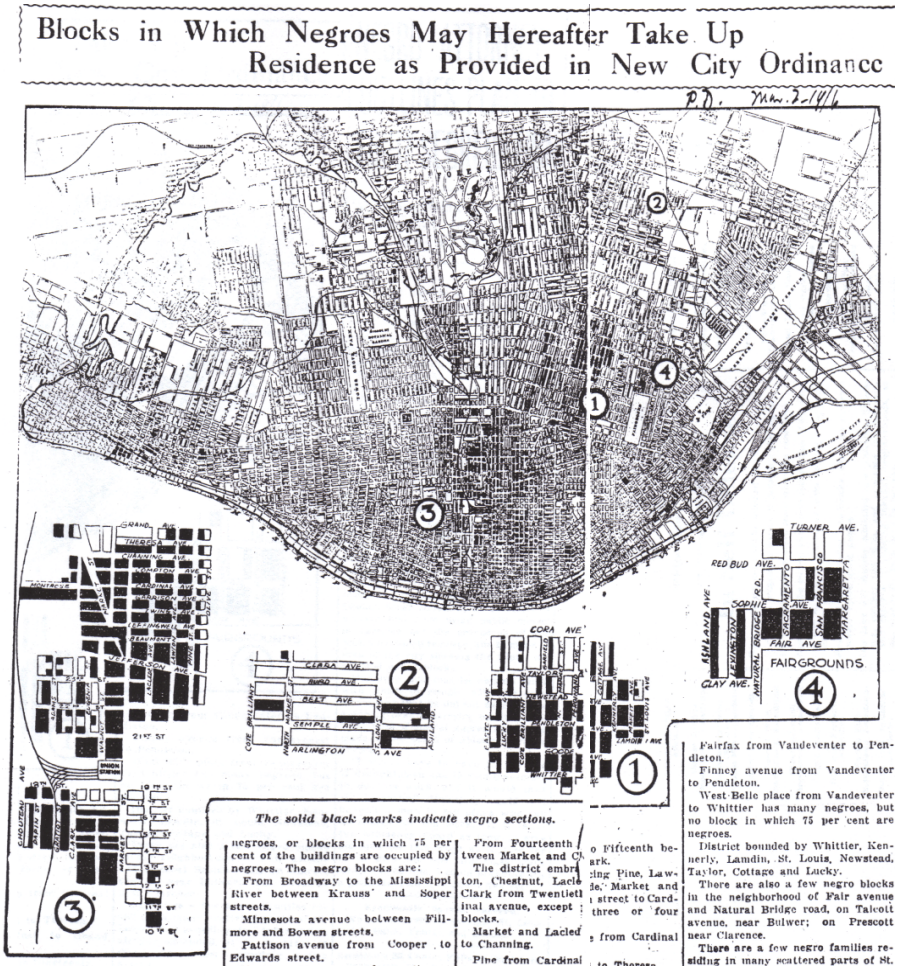

Figure 2: Spatial boundaries of black settlement set by segregation ordinance. Note the Fairgrounds area (listed as area number 4). Source: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 2, 1916.

The city-wide ordinance did not last long. One year later, the U.S. Supreme Court denied the legality of residential segregation ordinances such as St. Louis's in its 1917 *Buchanan v. Worley* decision, which focused on a particular exclusionary zoning attempt

[29] *St. Louis Republic*, March 1, 1916.

in Louisville, Kentucky.[30] Improvement and protective associations, as a result, turned to new methods of excluding African Americans from their neighborhoods, particularly legal contracts known as race restrictive covenants, which required property owners within a subdivision to sell only to white buyers.[31]

As late as 1947, new residential developments such as North Pointe, a community in the area bounded by Walnut Park, Baden, the city-county line, and the cemeteries, were "drawing up restrictions for [that] subdivision," which included "the obtaining of the signatures of the various property owners."[32] The agreed-upon restrictions, because of the unavailability of documentation, are unclear. They likely included numerous physical and use requirements intended to contribute to the aesthetic qualities of the whole subdivision, but they just as likely included exclusion of African Americans, explicitly or implicitly.[33] By agreeing to the restrictions, homeowners in North Pointe were bound by possible legal action, but they also were influenced by peer pressure that the association itself legitimated. As writer and urban observer M.M. Costantin noted in the early 1980s, the "unwritten law on the North Side . . . was never to sell to blacks."[34]

Race restrictive covenants too came under attack. In the 1948 *Shelley v. Kraemer* case debated before the U.S. Supreme Court, the Marcus Avenue Improvement Association, a group that represented an area on the fringes of African American settlement in St. Louis's West End, fought to uphold the enforceability of race restrictive

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[30] Fisher, *Let the People Decide*, 76.

[31] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 208.

[32] "North Pointe Association Meet Monday," *Community News*, September 4, 1947.

[33] McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 69.

[34] Costantin, *Sidestreets St. Louis*, 46.

covenants in their neighborhood. Despite similar victories won by homeowners groups in other cities such as Los Angeles, Cleveland, Columbus, New York, Washington, D.C., and Detroit in their specific localities, the Marcus Avenue group ultimately lost and the ordinance's legality was deemed unconstitutional.[35] Soon, the Marcus Avenue group folded and the previously white neighborhood quickly became a black working- and middle-class community.[36]

The legacy of these improvement associations stretched into the 1950s. By then, groups were influenced by both federally-mandated developments such as the *Shelley v. Kramer* decision and the specific characteristics of each city neighborhood and the city as whole.[37] Because residential segregation was so entrenched, for example, the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which desegregated the nation's schools, would have little actual immediate effect on St. Louis's schools.[38] When integration did happen, reactions reflected that same vigilant sense of neighborhood homogeneity. Residents and students in northwest St. Louis, for example, initially met integration at the local Beaumont High School with hostility.[39] By the 1950s, the historical separation of races helped lead some North Side neighborhoods, especially those in the northwest and north-central sections of the city, to express the same characteristics of "defended" and

[35] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 208.; Fisher, *Let the People Decide*, 78-79.

[36] Fisher, *Let the People Decide*, 79. The Marcus Avenue group was outside of the boundaries of the private places in the West End mentioned earlier in the section. Those exclusive residential neighborhoods did not need race restrictive covenants to exclude African Americans; the homes there were simply too expensive for most St. Louisans of any race to afford.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 514.

[39] Ulery, "Walnut Park," 69.

"undefended" neighborhoods in Detroit at midcentury as described by historian Thomas J. Sugrue.

Sugrue uses those designations to differentiate between similar white Detroit neighborhoods based on the degree of resistance to settlement of blacks in each one. They shared many characteristics, and were more alike than different. Both were practically all-white, usually working- or middle-class neighborhoods where African Americans had not previously settled in any significant numbers. In "undefended" neighborhoods, white residents typically reacted to black settlement in their previously all-white blocks with relatively little violence. Opposition to the settlement existed, but paled in comparison to "defended" neighborhoods. Those areas were typically characterized by all-white, "predominantly blue-collar populations with median incomes above the city average," with many skilled workers and single-family homes characterized by relatively modest architecture built between the 1920s and 1940s.[40] When the racial and class homogeneity of their neighborhoods was threatened, "to the extent that the neighborhood bordered lower-class and minority communities, improvement associations [that represented those neighborhoods] took on a decidedly protectionist and reactionary caste."[41] Sugrue focuses primarily on race, but he briefly notes in a footnote that neighborhood associations representing "defended" areas in Detroit also participated in expressway debates.[42]

[40] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 235, 237.

[41] Fisher, *Let the People Decide*, 79.

[42] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 340n.

Similarly, "defended" neighborhoods in North St. Louis such as Walnut Park, Fairgrounds, and O'Fallon, among others, were working-class areas with homeownership on the rise. Like their counterparts in Detroit, they were ethnically heterogeneous and contained substantial Roman Catholic populations.[43] Catholic parishes, though other denominations were represented, socially and geographically dominated many North Side areas, especially in Fairgrounds, Hyde Park, and Murphy-Blair, and served socializing functions for new ethnic residents.[44] Ethnic parishes—whether German, Irish, Polish, or any other—for instance, created strong geographical and social boundaries. While Protestant churches and Jewish synagogues could sell their buildings and move elsewhere, accelerating the movement of people out of a particular area of change, Catholic parishes were, as required by church doctrine, immovable. In this way, parishes helped anchor Catholics to the areas they encompassed, and resulted in neighborhood protectionism.[45]

That is not to say that Catholic leaders fully endorsed the racial exclusion espoused by white neighborhood residents. As historian John T. McGreevy notes, tension existed between higher levels of leadership, who felt it morally necessary to welcome African Americans, and priests who headed individual parishes within the neighborhoods where white parishioners opposed such integration. This made the Catholic Church a primary agent of change and concurrently a stubborn resister. For example, the Jesuit institution, St. Louis University, at the insistence of professor Claude Heithaus, S.J.,

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[43] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 235-237; Jess M. Ulery, "Walnut Park," 50, 51.

[44] McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 15, 17.

[45] Ibid., 19-20.

Father William Markoe, and black Catholics, was in 1944 one of the first schools in the city to open its doors to black students. Three years later, all Catholic high schools in the archdiocese were integrated, while parish grade schools in the city remained segregated into the early 1950s, just as were all other public grade schools in Missouri.[46]

Despite an official directive in 1946 by local Archbishop Joseph Cardinal Ritter to integrate city parishes (and threats of excommunication if parishes did not comply), racial exclusion, strengthened by the persistence of residential segregation, continued in most individual neighborhoods and churches. Parishes located in areas with quickly growing populations of African Americans, such as St. Alphonsus "Rock" near midtown St. Louis, integrated relatively quickly. But even though explicitly racist language and attitudes became increasingly invisible in public discourse, small anecdotes indicate a less than smooth transition occurred in St. Louis. For example, an article in the *Community News* cheerily announced that "Minstrel Follies of 1946" would be performed at Holy Ghost Catholic Church, near Fairgrounds Park.[47]

Parish boundaries provided a template, but homeownership, common architecture, and social, familial, and political bonds just as likely hardened neighborhood identity and racial attitudes. As Sugrue notes, white urban dwellers in Detroit "invented communities of race in the city that they defined spatially."[48] By drawing racial boundaries and using violence, from angry phone calls to fistfights to firebombing, to hold those boundaries,

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[46] McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 204; Doris A. Wesley, Wiley Price, and Ann Morris, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, 12.

[47] McGreevy, 210; *Community News*, April 25, 1946.

[48] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 234.

"whites reinforced their own fragile racial identity,"[49] as something other than a marginalized ethnic group. Homeownership, where it was common, reinforced these rigid definitions.[50] These definitions held for North St. Louis as well. In fact, the residential segregation ordinance had intended to legally define those boundaries.

While racial interaction was generally uncommon, in North Side neighborhoods interaction between ethnic groups was common, and younger generations mixed more readily. Areas such as Hyde Park were ethnically and socially diverse. "I mean there was German, Russian; there was a lot of Polish [in Murphy-Blair]. A whole bunch of Italians. But everybody got along real good. Never were any problems," remembered Joseph Dodson years later.[51] Many North Side neighborhoods historically possessed predominantly German identities as seen in its institutions and landmarks, such as Hyde Park's Turnverein. Like much of the German population that once dominated the whole city, though, the ethnic identification of those areas had diminished as a result of the propaganda and paranoia of the World War I era. Catholic and Lutheran Germans coexisted with numerous Polish Catholics. Despite the common interaction, tensions existed. As another longtime resident claimed, the North Side was "a neighborhood of turf wars" in the 1950s.[52]

Heterogeneity characterized the North Side to some degree, but from the perspective of 1950s race relations, much of the North Side was substantially

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[49] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 234.

[50] McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries*, 18.

[51] Joseph Dodson interview by Holly Hughes, November 11, 2002, Old North St. Louis Restoration Group Archives.

[52] George Eberle to Patrick Horvath, March 30, 2001, Old North St. Louis Restoration Group Archives.

homogeneous. Racial divisions based on skin color simplistically defined residents and their neighborhoods. Northsiders used "white" and "black" to easily discern neighborhood quality. When faced with outside threats such as a possible influx of African Americans, the ethnic and social heterogeneity of the neighborhoods dissolved somewhat, and "whiteness" became a self-defining characteristic for the working class. When asked if Murphy-Blair was predominantly white, one life-long resident—the same one who said the area housed all kinds of different ethnic groups—responded, "All white! There was not a monkey around here."[53] Census data confirms these distinctions as well by identifying foreign born residents as "white."

White and black residents of North St. Louis, as another longtime resident, John Vignali stated, "had our own areas then." [54] On the near North Side, an African American presence was rare across a certain dividing street. If a black individual did venture beyond that line, his or her presence was met with disbelief or the threat of violence. As Dodson, a resident of Murphy-Blair, recalled years later, "Cass Avenue was a draw line. You didn't see a colored person this side [north] of it. If they did, they got their ass kicked and sent back."[55]

The northwest neighborhoods were not integrated, either. Of the more than 13,100 residents in and around Baden, only 150 were black, with most living in a flood plain area east of Broadway. Other northwest areas were nearly one hundred percent white. For

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[53] Joseph Dodson, interview by Holly Hughes, November 11, 2002, Old North St. Louis Oral History Project, Old North St. Louis Restoration Group Archives, St. Louis. Born in 1929, Dodson was a lifelong resident of Murphy-Blair.

[54] John A. Vignali, November 8, 2002. Old North St. Louis Oral History Project, Old North St. Louis Restoration Group Archives, St. Louis. Vignali, a lifelong resident of the Murphy-Blair area, went on to say, "This area [Murphy-Blair north of Cass] was totally white."

[55] Joseph Dodson interview by Holly Hughes, November 11, 2002.

example, of the over 27,000 people residing in Walnut Park and surrounding areas in 1950, only 20 were African American, a number significantly less than neighborhoods to the south and those closer to the central business district. In fact, more residents of Walnut Park had been born in other countries such as Italy, Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, England, and Germany. During the height of anti-Communist suspicion in the United States, there were over two and a half times as many residents born in the Soviet Union living in Walnut Park as American-born black residents in 1950.[56]

Following the Supreme Court decision striking down restrictive covenants, African American residents increasingly settled in some wards closer to the area south of Fairgrounds Park (just north of the Ville, a longtime African American community in central St. Louis) in the mid-twentieth century.[57] The two census tracts to the south and west of Fairgrounds Park showed a nearly 50 percent increase in the black population over 1940 numbers, an increase of 1067 persons. This was a significantly larger increase than that witnessed in areas north of the park. Those areas never had large African American populations, and in 1940 there were only 59 persons identified as black in the area. By 1950, this number had decreased to 52. This made Fairgrounds Park a dividing line similar to Cass Avenue in the near North Side neighborhoods. Showing the stark racial division along spatial lines, one census tract in the Murphy-Blair area north of Cass Avenue was 22 percent black, and the tract just south of Cass was over 77 percent black.[58]

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[56] 1950 Census; compiled by author.

[57] Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Bissell-College Hill*; Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Fairgrounds*.

[58] 1940 Census; 1950 Census; compiled by author. North of Cass Ave., 26-B; South of Cass Ave., 25-B. Areas directly north of 26-B approached 0 percent.

Separation did not translate into racial harmony, as one particular example of penetrating a spatially-defined "defended" North Side community of race indicates. On June 21, 1949, over 200 angry whites clashed with African Americans at the Fairgrounds Park swimming pool, desegregated by the city officials earlier that day. A riot ensued leaving numerous injuries. With shocking pictures of angry white youths from the neighborhood standing over hurt black men, the story was carried in the nationally distributed magazines *Time* and *Life*. Local African American newspaper the *St. Louis Argus* proclaimed outrage at the incident and carried the story as bold-faced, front page news. The downtown daily *Globe-Democrat* did the same. Revealingly, the *North St. Louis Community News*, which served a geographically narrow area with large white populations, relegated its quite vague report of the event below the fold, describing it as a "disturbance."[59]

Evidence suggests the riot had at least a circumstantial connection to a local improvement association. The O'Fallon Improvement Association, which traced its roots to 1922, claimed to "alert [residents] to all the essential necessities required to make and hold this section as an attractive residential neighborhood" over an area larger than eighty-six blocks.[60] In mid-June 1949, one year after the Supreme Court denial of race restrictive covenants, and just one week before the Fairgrounds pool desegregation, the organization expanded its protective boundaries to include not only O'Fallon neighborhood but the entirety of Fairgrounds Park. The meeting drew "unusually large

[59] *Life*, July 4, 1949; *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 22, 1949, with editorial on June 23, 1949; *North St. Louis Community News*, June 23, 1949.

[60] "Anniversary of O'Fallon Park Protective Group," *North St. Louis Community News*, September 18, 1947. The newspaper lists the group's name as the O'Fallon Protective Association.

attendance, due [its] importance."[61] In that context, the O'Fallon Park Improvement and Protective Association served other purposes than lobbying for services, maintaining local facilities, and fighting an expressway plan: "improvement" and "protection" also meant the stabilization of property values achieved in part by excluding African Americans.[62]

While improvement, protective, and homeowners associations in North St. Louis existed as independent entities, members formed the Council for Community Preservation "to unite the forces" of the various groups and preserve local property values.[63] As one member of the Chouteau-Lindell Improvement Association and Council for Community Preservation would note, the council allowed citizens that made up the neighborhood groups to work together for other issues such as "zoning and anything that will prove detrimental to our neighborhood . . . because in group power we can accomplish more than we can alone and unaided."[64] Organizing across neighborhood borders also would help them combat any rhetoric coming from elsewhere in the city that might marginalize them as "selfish."

"Composed of Neighborhood Protective and Improvement Associations,"[65] the membership of the council consisted of working- and middle-class, ethnically-diverse but white residents, and included neighborhood businessmen in prominent positions.

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[61] "Expansion of O'Fallon Park Protective Group," *North St. Louis Community News*, June 16, 1949.

[62] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 211.

[63] "Meeting Tonight of C of C Pres.," *Community News*, Septermber 5, 1946.

[64] "Improvement Association President Answers Reader Jolly," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 16, 1955.

[65] Ad, *North St. Louis Community News*, August 26, 1953.

Members in the early 1950s included "civic minded men of our City like William Eichenser, who are engaged in every line of work that you can think to mention. Who, after a day's work take time to devote to a very worthy cause of working to improve their neighborhoods and eliminate slums and blight."[66] Prior to 1948, the St. Louis Real Estate Exchange, an ally of the United Welfare Association during the segregation ordinance debate,[67] was heavily involved in pushing race restrictive covenants in the city and, concurrent with institutionalized FHA practices, was a primary agent of stirring racial fears.[68]

Born in 1924 and a longtime resident of northwest St. Louis, Eichenser was also the owner of Eichenser Realty Company. He also served on the board of the North St. Louis Business Men's Association, a business group with interests similar to those of homeowners associations. Like real estate developers throughout the city's history, Eichenser was likely involved in property speculation and residential and commercial development in northwest St. Louis, making threats to property values a key issue for him. He was nonetheless a tireless advocate for his causes, and would even serve as treasurer for a rehabilitation group in Hyde Park in 1956.[69]

The members of the Choteau-Lindell group shared similar economic interests with the other groups of the council, but the umbrella group's stated purpose was "preservation." Preservation meant keeping the community intact physically,

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[66] *North St. Louis Community News*, February 16, 1955. Choteau-Lindell Improvement Association president Joseph C. Schreiber quoted.

[67] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 436.

[68] McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 72-73.

[69] "Hyde Park Group Elects L.M. Farrell 1956 President," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 11, 1956.

economically, and socially. With their proximity to areas with larger African American populations, white residents in the Choteau-Lindell area, like the Marcus Avenue residents before them, faced encroachments from black settlers in larger numbers than residents in northwest neighborhoods. This possibility made racial "preservation" of their neighborhood all the more urgent. "[One] can rest assured that whatever endangers your neighborhood," he wrote, "your Improvement Association will know about it." [70]

Downtown Leaders, Suburbanization, Expressways, and Race

The racial subtext extended into official citywide planning. City planners effectively set the terms of the expressway debate with the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947. With maps detailing the whole city, they defined a resiliently fragmented landscape, which contained countless areas architecturally, socially, and culturally different from one another, in simplistic terms that would have grave consequences for those neighborhoods and the city as a whole. The city's oldest neighborhoods that ringed the central business district and contained racial and ethnic minorities, as well as some of the city's oldest housing stock, were now simply, without any acknowledgement of their complexities, labeled "obsolete."

Slums, as "obsolete" areas were commonly termed, had been an object of concern, hatred, and fear in U.S. cities since the 1820s, when reformers attacked them for the first time. Many of these areas no doubt had numerous health and safety problems, as well as degrees of decaying housing stock and lack of economic opportunities. The reformers, however, failed to acknowledge larger socio-economic problems such as the influence of bigotry and segregation and placed the blame for the conditions in the slums

[70] *North St. Louis Community News*, February 16, 1955.

squarely on the people that lived in them. Accordingly, the generalizations they made only exacerbated fears of spreading slums.

By the twentieth century, urban business interests and city authorities across the country needed a way to describe areas they deemed problematic, but not quite slums, in a way that would alert the public of the need for redevelopment projects. In St. Louis, the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947 outlined in writing an increasingly common designation used by decision-makers and newspapers for areas that were threatened by decline that would pepper almost every discussion of the city's problems. As figure 3 shows, planners officially deemed areas on the North and South Sides surrounding "obsolete" areas as "blighted."

A vague term for which people had different definitions, blighted areas were variously described as: tracts where land values were no longer increasing or were increasing less rapidly than other areas of the city, areas of old buildings, areas in which taxes did not cover city services, or areas that simply appeared to be declining.[71] According to an early 1953 report in the *Globe-Democrat*, St. Louis's advocates of redevelopment claimed that residential areas surrounding downtown were blighted in part because they "yield little revenue in taxes, but have high crime rates and a high incidence of disease."[72]

[71] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 346-348.

[72] Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 1, 1953.

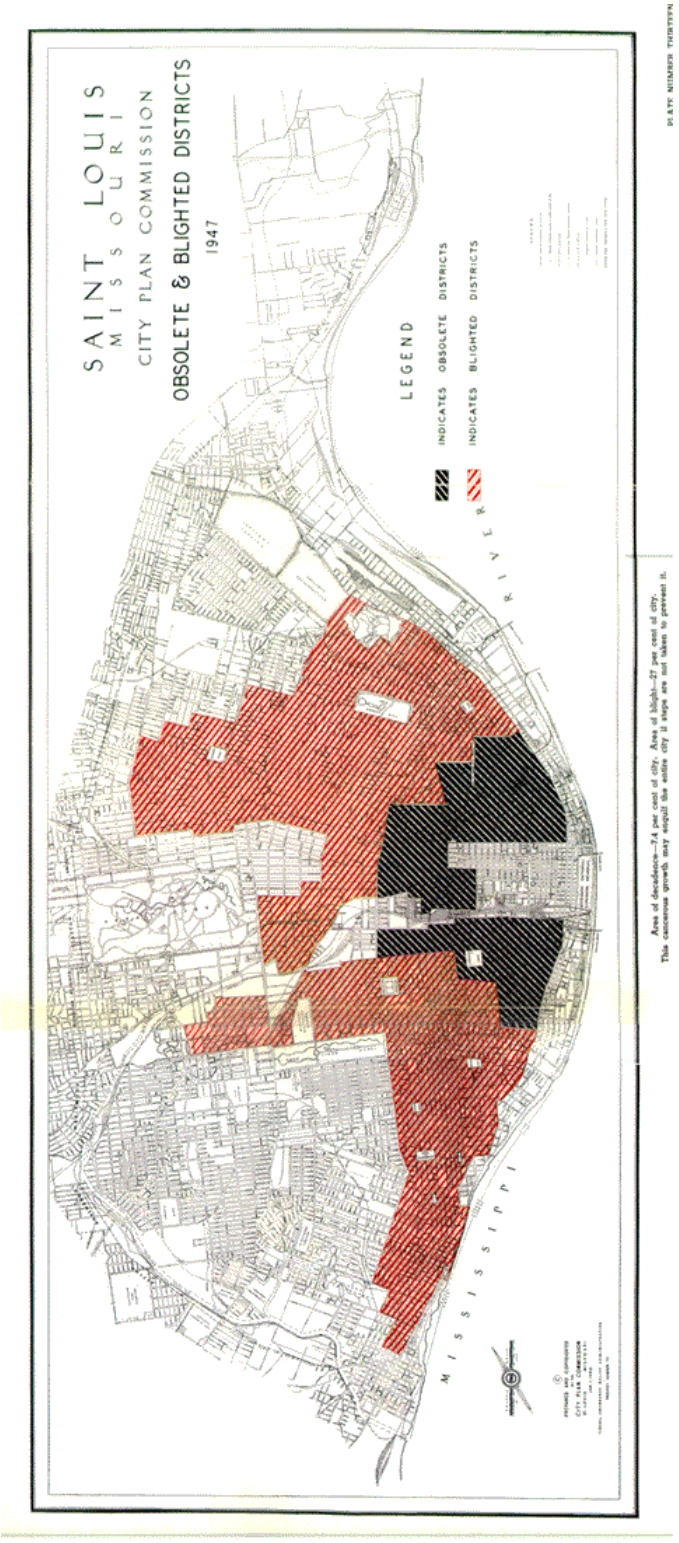

Figure 3: Obsolete and Blighted Districts in St. Louis. North Side "obsolete" areas included Murphy-Blair. Areas consisting of Hyde Park, College Hill, O'Fallon, and Fairgrounds were designated as "blighted." Baden and Walnut Park were deemed neither, but the latter bordered such areas. Source: *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

Blighted areas differed from slums in degree. Downtown business leaders and civic officials saw them as slums in waiting, infectious or cancerous areas that would spread and attack the city as a whole if not fixed or removed immediately.[73] Logically, if most areas that were cleared were called slums, and most slums contained predominantly African American or ethnic minorities[74] and had low property values, then a blighted area referred to an area with old but not decrepit housing, non-increasing property values, and demographics at risk of shifting. If property values were to drop—which in the context of 1950s federal mortgage preferences, City Plan Commission designations, and broader social attitudes could happen by the presence of just one African American resident—then the already at-risk blighted area could become affordable enough to be overrun by previously excluded African Americans, making it a slum. Because blight was believed to creep outward from the source, even neighborhoods not deemed blighted were at risk due to their proximity to blighted districts. Thus even new construction in Walnut Park and Baden could be threatened by blight.

For this reason, the term "blight," like "slum," was a self-fulfilling prophecy, a top-down definition that instilled a sense of disbelief and fear in residents. "Slum" and "blight" were used so seemingly interchangeably and authoritatively by policymakers that residents felt helpless in changing outside perceptions once the tag was applied. The Marcus Avenue area had been blighted in the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947. Following the Shelley v. Kramer decision one year later, the racial composition of the area changed rapidly, and thus worsened outsider perceptions of the area. Even areas that

[73] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 349.

[74] Ibid., 369.

improved could not shake the label, as one resident who would live in North St. Louis between 1954 and 1973 suggested. “Though we weren’t really a slum, we never felt like we lived in a slum, we always felt we had a regular neighborhood,” he said. “But we were made to feel somewhat by politicians at that time that we were living in a bad part of the city.”[75]

If used effectively, euphemistic labels such as blight could help drum up support for larger planning objectives in the city. The terms also helped narrowed the set of possibilities to either a bright future, or a dark one. In 1950, articles in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* used the “slum” and “blight” labels to paint a horrifying portrait of St. Louis at midcentury. The city, they claimed, was rotting from the obsolete areas surrounding the core, and the rot was creeping outward. If drastic measures were not undertaken, slums would overtake blighted areas, and then destroy previously healthy areas. According to the articles, the city must set aside its internal differences and make tough choices as a civic whole. Otherwise, the city would suffer consequences almost too dire to be imagined. There was no middle ground, as was clearly evident in the articles’ terrifyingly either/or title: “Progress or Decay? St. Louis Must Choose.”[76]

This dichotomy often led to dramatic—and intentional—changes to the urban landscape that benefited certain groups more than others. On the North and South Sides, blighted areas, which were more likely to be populated by ethnic and working-class whites than slums or high-value areas, could be saved by passing a Minimum Housing Standards ordinance, which would facilitate a then-unproven plan of rehabilitation in the

[75] Patrick Kleaver, interview by Sun Tschetter, July 5, 2003, transcript, Old North St. Louis Oral History Project, Old North St. Louis Restoration Group Archives, St. Louis.

[76] “Progress or Decay? St. Louis Must Choose,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 19, 1950.

city. Obsolete areas, stated the City Plan Commission, simply must be cleared and reconstructed with better housing for low-income residents.[77] Both must be addressed or the decay would spread outward. "Without a definite plan for the rehabilitation of the present blighted areas," said the *Comprehensive City Plan* years earlier in 1947, "new obsolete areas will develop faster than present areas can be reconstructed."[78]

Racial and value-laden distinctions extended to the federal government. At the same time it was subsidizing suburban housing construction, the federal government, at the urging of businessmen, civic leaders, and planners across the country, provided the means to clear troublesome central city districts and rebuild to the needs of each particular city. The federal Housing Act of 1937, passed mainly to boost the economy during the depression, had set the stage for slum clearance and urban renewal by authorizing the creation of local redevelopment agencies. The most decisive federal legislation, however, came with Title I of the Housing Act of 1949 during the Truman presidency, a culmination of previous housing bills and the continued urgings from downtown businessmen, big-city mayors, planners, and labor unions. In the past, those pro-redevelopment groups had faced substantial barriers such as cost and the difficulty of acquiring large tracts of land. Title I changed that by authorizing cities to acquire land through eminent domain and then turn it over to private hands for rebuilding of commercial, residential, or industrial space. The goal, therefore, was not necessarily to make better neighborhoods, but instead to revitalize the central business district and put

[77] "Housing: Obsolete Areas," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

[78] "Housing, Blighted Districts," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

cities on stronger financial footing by curbing decentralization.[79] "Why…can't we find a way to put the city's real estate to uses that will pay off in dollars and cents?" asked *Globe-Democrat* writer John Costello in his cheery piece on the dramatic changes planned by downtown leaders.[80]

Title I left redevelopment decisions to local redevelopment agencies, which were highly responsive to local business interests,[81] and, in St. Louis, practically intertwined. In 1953, the Industrial and Commercial Committee, headed by prominent lawyer Phil Lashly, would announce plans for urban redevelopment in St. Louis, along with concurrent plans for expressways. Members of the committee were, according to Costello, "highly experienced St. Louisans" and represented a meeting of various interests throughout the city. They included Saul Dubinsky, chairman of the City Plan Commission and real estate developer; city Building Commissioner Albert Baum; engineer William Bernard; architect Arthur F. Schwartz; and manufacturers' representative Harold J. Wrape. The plans, which worked to give St. Louis a "face lift," included the city agency's acquisition of slums or blighted areas through eminent domain and turning them over to private developers. Title I stipulated that cleared areas would have to be rebuilt within the guidelines of a city's master plan.[82] With the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947, St. Louis already had laid the preparations for urban renewal.

Similar projects in previous years had set the standard for redevelopment in St. Louis, resulting in public housing. Early low-cost public housing projects included the

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[79] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 340, 358, 373, 376, 378.

[80] Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 1, 1953.

[81] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 378.

[82] Ibid., 377.

Works Progress Administration-funded Neighborhood Gardens directly north of downtown and Carr Square Village on the near North Side, as well as Clinton-Peabody on the near South Side. With passage of the Housing Act of 1949, Cochran Gardens on the North Side in 1953 would be the first in the city's series of high-rise projects and set the stage for the infamous Pruitt-Igoe just to the west. All would require the complete demolition of neighborhoods deemed slums or blighted. Thus this urban renewal, which was being proposed and carried out at the same time as the push for expressways, created a tone of inevitability of change, which likely resulted in anxiety about the future of one's neighborhood, especially if a new expressway were to be located there. If residents did nothing to stop or influence the dramatic changes brewing around them, then they risked witnessing their homes and neighborhoods being wiped off the grid.

Because the city's boundaries had been fixed in 1876, areas in the northwest that neighborhood improvement associations readily defended were some of the last areas of development within the city limits. The boundary fixture, when coupled with broader policies and cultural attitudes, helped lead to wide-scale suburban development in the St. Louis region. In ways that underscore the pervasiveness of racism in American culture and its resonating effects, St. Louis County, the region's primary location of suburban development, serves as an excellent example of how federal housing policy contributed to suburbanization. Working off of old standards set by the New Deal's initial housing program, the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC), the FHA used detailed Residential Security Maps to designate the stability of neighborhoods and determine, in their estimation, the likelihood of successful mortgages. Minimum requirements for lot and house size, street setback, and proximity to other structures were used to help

determine grades. These maps designated sections A through D, with A being best, and assigned appropriate colors to those sections.[83]

As the HOLC map (figure 4) shows, sections of the region deemed good investments were given an A, or green, rating. These typically included municipalities in St. Louis County with large estates for the wealthy, like Ladue, home to the exclusive St. Louis Country Club. Areas deemed good, but not as desirable were labeled a two, or blue. These areas included parts of some affluent suburbs such as Clayton and University City, as well as some of the northwest areas of St. Louis including parts of Baden and a small area adjacent to O'Fallon Park. The next areas down the list, graded level C, or yellow, included parts of the Hyde Park area. Lastly, the least desirable areas were labeled D, or red. These areas contained the dreaded slums and many blighted areas, such as Murphy-Blair, and were greatly defined by the demographic make-up the area. Areas with any number of African Americans were redlined regularly.[84] These official federal designations, based on social and physical prejudices, would have dramatic effects on urban neighborhoods in the decades to come.

[83] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 209, 208, 197.

[84] Ibid., 199-200.

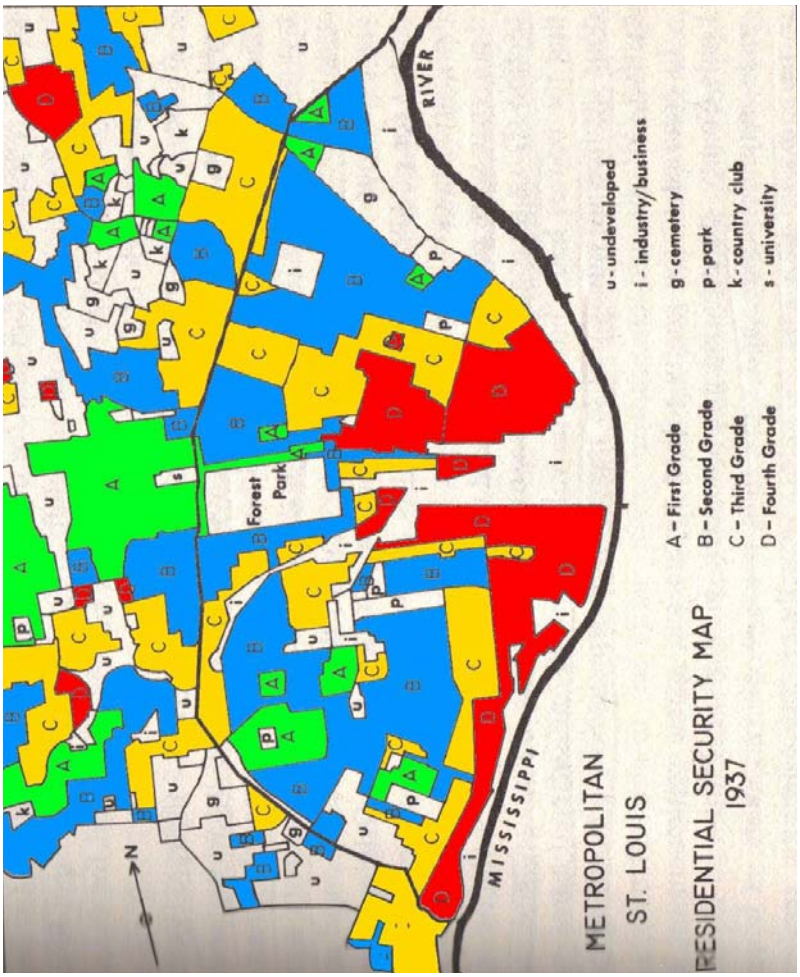

Figure 4: Metropolitan St. Louis Residential Security Map produced by the Home Owners Loan Corporation, 1937. Note the wide variety of housing designations on the North Side. Source: Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier,* 199. Colors added by author.

The FHA mortgage standards were based in part on personal opinions that expressed a long-entrenched anti-urban cultural bias.[85] As historian Kenneth Jackson notes, the coding of a white, working class area to the southwest of Fairgrounds Park as a fourth grade, or redlined, area, in the late-1940s, was based largely on the personal preferences of the HOLC surveyors. Appraisers cited the area's small lots, short setbacks

[85] Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978). 4-5. Boyer traces the movement for urban moral social control from the Jacksonian Era to the Progressive Era. At the heart of the movement was a deep distrust of the moral influence of poor—usually ethnic—portions of the cities.

from the street, the appearance of congestion, older housing, and proximity to industrial and "less desirable areas to the south,"[86] which included neighborhoods with large black populations. Surveyors graded the area to the east and south of the section, and located south of Fairgrounds Park, C. North of the park, emphasizing its status a dividing line, most areas were graded B. Suburban areas varied in grades as well in 1937, but as middle class migration to the county increased, these areas gradually improved in quality and preference by federal surveyors. Accordingly, five times as many mortgages were issued for homes in the county as in the city between 1934 and 1960.[87]

The simplistic bias held by federal surveyors was little different from the one held by the city's planners. While planners noted specific, though debatable in seriousness, quality of life problems such as 33,000 dwellings with only outside toilets, and an additional 25,000 toilets that were shared, they also pointed out problems they assumed were self-evident. "We have 82,000 dwellings in structures built before 1900," claimed the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.[88] Old, in the views of St. Louis's urban planners, meant obsolete and undesirable. By those standards much of the North Side was unsuitable for living.

While federal lending practices would allow many working-class residents to buy their own homes, the official grading—and for some homes, downgrading—of property would also further exacerbate racial tensions by increasingly the likelihood of African Americans moving to white working-class neighborhoods.[89] The C and D grades for

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[86] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 199.

[87] Ibid., 210-211.

[88] "Introduction," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

[89] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 208-258.

areas south of Fairgrounds Park ignored neighborhood complexities and, by defining large areas into simple categories, no doubt decreased property values and encouraged the racial transition planners and white residents feared. Combined with planners' equally simplistic "obsolete" and "blighted" designations, the FHA grades helped define the urban environment in St. Louis in ways that made expressway planning a technical problem that could be solved relatively easily through studies and analysis. Both of those methods of designating neighborhood quality instilled fear and anger in white residents—directed not only at African Americans but also at the downtown power brokers.

Federal surveyors and local urban planners approached similar perceived problems—in particular, declining property values—with different goals in mind. The FHA worked to satisfy housing demand and boost the economy by providing widespread affordable housing as efficiently as possible for the entire country. City planners sought to arrest "decay," encourage industrial growth, stabilize the central business district, and improve housing within the city limits. Urban renewal through the use of Title I funds would become a primary method by which planners and their allies attempted to remake cities, but expressways too were considered tools that could stabilize, and in some cases increase, property values.

Echoing the motives of downtown businessmen across the country in the early 1950s, the Elliott Plan claimed that the expressways would lead to the "enhancement of residential property values in midtown, uptown and county areas" by, in part, increasing their accessibility. The expressways could also remove "slum conditions where they exist in the areas acquired for rights-of-way."[90] Essentially, the new expressways would serve

[90] Elliott Plan, 52.

the transportation needs of the upper- and middle-class drivers that increasingly chose to live in the suburbs, while further increasing the value of their residences by conveniently removing the slums and blight that threatened property values.

There are numerous documented examples of political leaders using highways to clear undesirable areas in order to accomplish, in part, the larger goals of downtown and city-wide revitalization. Historian Thomas J. Sugrue, quoting other scholars, pointed out that city planners in Detroit and other American cities used the expressway as "a handy device for razing slums."[91] Historian Richard O. Davies notes that "in city after city, highway planners instinctively selected lower income neighborhoods for the paths of their new routes, perhaps realizing that these residents had less political influence and were less likely to organize an effective protest."[92]

In his much-contested plan for Richmond, Virginia, Harland Bartholomew, whose firm contracted work in cities across the country, designed freeways to slow decentralization and revitalize downtown businesses. The highways would allow the central business district to grow by clearing the largely African American slums that surrounded it.[93] Some black communities, such as one in Birmingham, Alabama, would bear the brunt of highway planning in that city until the 1960s, when citizens organized to combat the racist policies of that city's leaders. In fact, when freeways would be designed

[91] Robert J. Mowitz and Deil S. Wright, *Profile of a Metropolis: A Case Book* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1962) quoted in Thomas J. Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 47.

[92] Davies, *The Age of Asphalt*, 32.

[93] Jeffrey Brown, "A Tale of Two Visions:Harland Bartholomew, Robert Moses, and the Development of the American Freeway," *Journal of Planning History* 4 (2005)," 16-17.

to rescue downtown their rights-of-way would typically decimate poor black communities well into the 1980s.[94]

The routing of expressways through black neighborhoods was never an explicit goal, but the frequency with which it occurred showed an implicit racism. The routing was often justified by other means. By the 1950s, World War II and the "liberal consensus" had generally driven explicit attacks on the ethnic or racial composition of slums from open public discourse. Racism in many parts of American society, with numerous exceptions, was increasingly expressed by passivity and inaction. The terms "slum," "blight," and "property values" were all euphemisms indicative of this shifting discourse.

Expressway planning fit this implicit racism conveniently. As urban historian Robert M. Fogelson notes, because urban expressways were often deemed appropriate for thinly populated, run-down areas such as waterfronts and industrial districts, "it was only a small step to the position that elevated highways [or other forms of urban expressways] might also be appropriate in slums and other run-down neighborhoods."[95] Since the costs of building expressways and slum clearance were staggering,[96] and despite federal funding for such projects, planners and other decision-makers saw opportunities to accomplish both goals with one project. This connection would make expressways tools for urban renewal.

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[94] Connerly, "From Racial Zoning to Community Empowerment," 99-114.

[95] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 280.

[96] Ibid., 332.

In St. Louis, the proposed highway routes would carefully avoid wealthy enclaves and industrial areas and would instead be plotted through less affluent communities, in part because of those communities' proximity to downtown, where the expressways converged. Urban renewal projects often would be located within or very near the rights-of-way for three proposed roads. The proposed Boone Expressway would cut through part of the Mill Creek Valley, a slum-ridden area of central St. Louis, and the Ozark would remove blighted parts of South St. Louis. In North St. Louis, the Mark Twain Expressway would cut through Murphy-Blair, St. Louis Place, western Hyde Park (often called Montgomery), and Fairgrounds, all areas designated as blighted by the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

The proposed Mark Twain Expressway thus could serve as the justification needed by downtown decision-makers to remove areas without costly clearance that they felt were draining the city as whole and were at risk of racial turnover. The blighted areas would be harder than slums to remove with federally-sponsored urban renewal, leaving new expressways as tools to do so if needed. In the least, removal of blighted areas would be seen as a minimal loss. In other words, downtown leaders saw the removal of these obsolete and blighted districts not necessarily as the primary purpose of expressways, but a useful by-product that would benefit their interests and, thus, the city as a whole.

Planners could use expressways in other manners to shape the physical and social development of the city, as well. Urban planners typically believed that expressways could separate residential areas from industrial ones, which could encourage the stabilization of neighborhood property values. In the Walnut Park area, for instance, a portion of the North Side not designated as blighted by the City Plan Commission, the

Elliott route would instead avoid most homes and separate the residential districts from one of North St. Louis's largest industrial areas to the south (see figure 5).

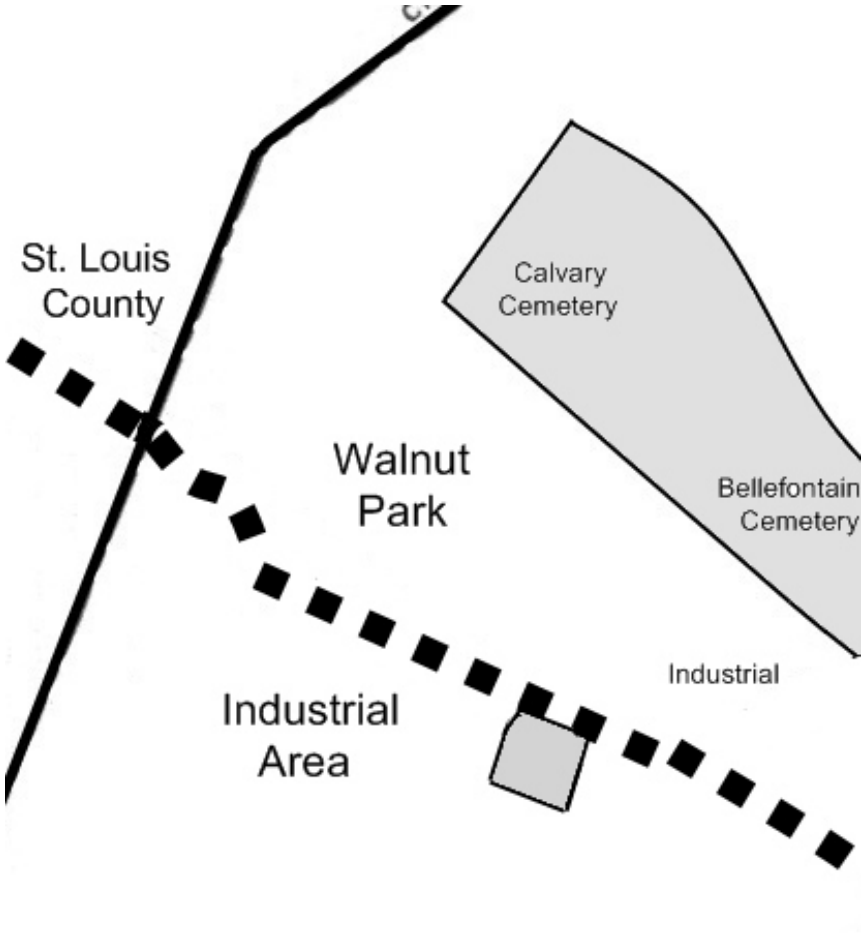

Figure 5: Elliott Route Separates Walnut Park and Industrial Area.
Map by author.

The proposed Elliott route would also separate districts, but not necessarily as city planners believed they should, at least openly. Instead of separating residential and commercial areas from industrial ones, the route would divide stable areas from unstable areas. As a route running northwest from downtown, it could not divide the city's obsolete districts from the blighted ones (a future north-south distributor highway slicing through the slums would come close), but it would divide, though not distinctly, much of

white North St. Louis from blighted areas that bordered predominantly African American sections to the south. Most areas south of the proposed line had been either wholly black or in racial transition in recent years (see figure 6).

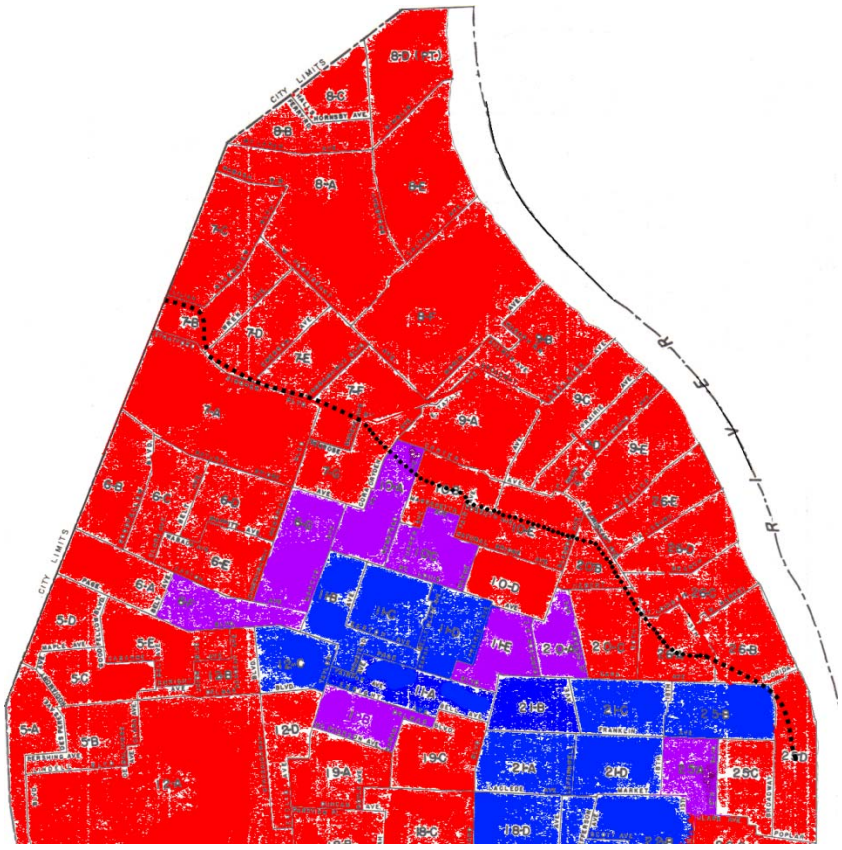

Figure 6: Elliott Route Separates Census Tracts of Differing Racial Composition, early 1950s. Red: nearly 100% white; Blue: nearly 100% black; Purple: transitioning from white to black. Source: U.S. Census Bureau map modified with census data by author.

If new highways could remove slums or blighted areas, and they could separate districts of use, it was believed they could also slow the spread of African Americans into white areas, and thus, considering FHA lending practices, stabilize property values. As the Mark Twain Expressway was proposed, however, it could serve the dual purpose of separating the areas and serving the population of North St. Louis. This would be done in

cities across the U.S. such as Atlanta, where expressways separated the central business district from the black communities that surrounded it.[97]

The fight against the expressway would thus be waged, in part, on an explicit level of fighting to save one's own home, church, or neighborhood from immediate destruction. On the other hand, there would be a battle against the impending decline of one's neighborhood by other factors. The construction of the expressway and its use—clearing, building, and subsequent noise and air pollution—would, it was feared, lower property values. If property values dropped, citizens might be less likely to fix up their old homes, further lowering property values. This would allow black residents or other undesirables to afford to move in.

Those perceptions would make the fight against the new highway a symbolic last attempt to avoid a seemingly inevitable decline of the neighborhood. "Hasn't the exodus to the county and other factors beyond our control created enough blighted neighborhoods without purposely creating others?" one citizen would ask. "Why buy [a property] in the city if one runs the chance of being run out for freeways?"[98] One alderman stated it more bluntly: the new Mark Twain Expressway "would make a slum area of much of this sector of the city in a few years."[99]

The connections were evident, if one looked closely enough. Echoing the United Welfare Association's hypothetical story about a woman who had worked her whole life to obtain a home in a nice neighborhood for it only to be unjustly stolen by invaders of

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[97] Harvey K. Newman, "Race and the Tourist Bubble in Downtown Atlanta," *Urban Affairs Review* 37 (2002): 7.

[98] Letter to editor from Charlotte Ross, *North St. Louis Community News*, March 18, 1955.

[99] "Resolution Adopted Against Proposed Expressway at Mass Meeting Held Last Monday," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 18, 1953. Alderman Charles McBride quoted.

another race, the *Community News* published a similarly fictional opinion piece deriding the effects of the proposed expressway on people and their property. The piece described homeowners for 25 years, who had worked to pay off their mortgages and raise kids, and within four or five years looked forward to small, hard-earned pensions, Social Security, and most of all, their sacred home. But now a new invader, an expressway, promised to leave them just as helpless. "What can they do?" The stakes were high, and the rhetoric fierce. "The emotional and mental impact [of losing one's home], will be very disturbing and will require continual treatment for many years."[100]

The North Side residents would use familiar networks such as aldermen to defend their communities, but they would also refashion their improvement associations toward the new cause of fighting the Mark Twain Expressway. All the while they would employ euphemisms such as "slums," "blight," and "property values" to suggest the larger cost of building the highway. Both supporters and opponents of the expressway used that long-developing rhetoric, influenced by historical physical and social fragmentation and racial segregation, to serve their respective ends. The same type of rhetoric that had helped separate the fenced-off corner from the wider setting continued to serve as the primary means by which debate in the 1950s was waged.

[100] Roy Pettibone, "Consider the Plight Of Mr. and Mrs. N. Before Expressway," *North St. Louis Community News*, May 25, 1955.

Chapter III

Surrounding the Expressway: Business, Politics, and Civic Disconnection in the Mark Twain Expressway Fight

After the initial meetings held by the Northwest, O'Fallon, and Walnut Park improvement associations in September and October 1952, the movement in opposition to the Mark Twain Expressway broadened to encompass the entire white North Side. As early as December 1952 a loose coalition was formed to fight, or at least shape, change. These new groups, like those that joined the movement first, were from areas of the city that had been growing or had seen newer residential construction in recent years, and were comprised of white residents. They included the North Pointe Improvement Association, which represented a residential area built in 1921 between the Calvary Cemetery and the city-county border[1]; the North St. Louis Improvement and Protective Association, likely a more geographically inclusive group focused solely on north city; and the Baden Chamber of Commerce, a business organization representing the northernmost portion of the city, showing the competition between downtown and the outlying business district.[2]

In the fight against the Mark Twain Expressway, North St. Louis neighborhood improvement and protective associations allied themselves with local business and

[1] Wayman, *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Walnut Park.*

[2] "North Side Group Voices Disapproval Of Highway Plan," *North St. Louis Community News*, December 10, 1952. Again, the distinction of what the "North Side" means is difficult to explain. The North Side, to be geographically correct, covered more areas than I typically discuss in this work. Many of those other neighborhoods were farther away from the proposed Mark Twain Expressway and closer to the central corridor.

merchants groups such as the Baden group. In many U.S. cities, including St. Louis, homeowners who opposed taxes imposed by downtown leaders found natural allies in businessmen who had competing interests with the central business district.[3] Business associations typically engaged in the same types of activities as homeowners associations: street improvements, sewers, and parks, and the removal of nuisances.[4] In northwest St. Louis, the West Florissant-Goodfellow Business Association, a group that represented commercial interests near the city-county border, claimed its purpose was "to do everything possible the district needs and serve the community in every way possible," just as many neighborhood associations claimed.[5]

Tensions between downtown, allied with the influential and wealthiest citizens, and outlying developing areas were common in the first half of the twentieth century in cities across the United States. In Detroit for example, the Committee of Fifty-One, a conglomeration of homeowners, outlying real estate, and outlying business associations, opposed subway plans in that city in 1929 as a ploy to benefit downtown at the expense of the outlying areas. Organized outlying merchants in Chicago waged a successful campaign to stop subways in Chicago as well.[6]

The uniting of those two types of forces—neighborhood improvement associations and business associations—gave the concerns of each of those separate groups a larger sense of legitimacy than either could have achieved alone. The expressway would span numerous pieces of the city's fragmented landscape. By

[3] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 246-247.

[4] Ibid., 35.

[5] "West Florissant-Goodfellow Business Association," *Community News*, December 17, 1931.

[6] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 88,97-98.

protesting not only from their particular fenced-off corners and instead organizing beyond the borders of their neighborhoods and business districts, North Side opponents of the Elliott Plan could more effectively combat rhetoric that might characterize them as selfish and unconcerned with the future of the whole of St. Louis.

Traditional political and social fragmentation and the accompanying rhetoric remained deeply entrenched in discourse, however. The two diametrically opposed sides—"the people" and "the interests"—that the rhetoric created were, by 1900 and into mid century, interchangeable depending on one's perspective. Both downtown leaders and North Side groups, as they and other groups had done in years past while opposing projects proposed by and meant to benefit wealthy West End and central corridor residents, used such rhetoric to characterize their opponents in order to accomplish their political ends. In the Mark Twain Expressway fight in the early 1950s, the primary agents of destructive change for the neighborhood improvement associations and their allies in outlying business districts were "downtown interests." Those in downtown, such as the mayor, city planners, and their corporate allies, felt the people in the neighborhoods with "selfish" motives need only be presented with the facts, and surely they would quiet their opposition, not only for "the good of the whole" but, as a part of that whole, for themselves. Then *everyone* in St. Louis—those in downtown, the neighborhoods, and the outlying business districts—would benefit from "progress."

Expansion of Industry and Urban Redevelopment in the Debate

The most vocal opposition to the Elliott route came from the northwestern groups, not groups from the older, denser areas closer to downtown that would bear more of the brunt of the clearance for the expressway. Indicative of this work to bring more

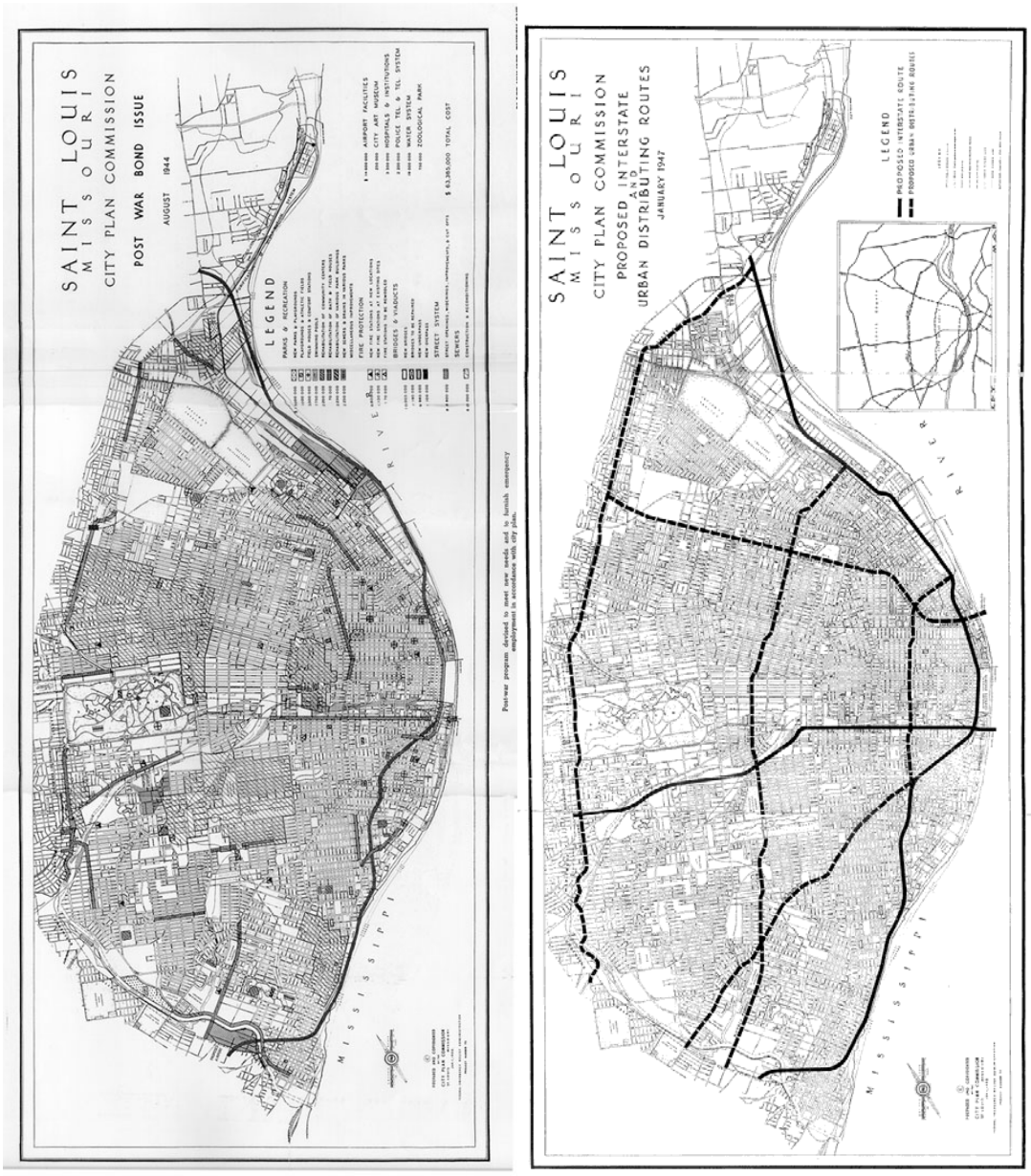
opposition groups into the fold, the Northwest Improvement Association, led by Russell Schmitt, had sold 580 maps of the proposed route to the concerned or merely curious by December 1952. "They've been selling like hot cakes," Schmitt emphasized.[7]

The rhetoric used by these groups helped frame the debate. Indicative of the rhetoric that would help define 1950s expressway opposition in all of St. Louis—and in retrospect come to haunt it—Schmitt said he recognized the importance of the highway for the city. After all, they did not oppose progress. The Mark Twain Expressway, he contended, certainly needed to be built. Schmitt and the protesters simply wanted it built not through their neighborhoods but instead on a nearby open tract of land along the Mississippi River.

This was the first mention among the opposition movement of a counter-proposal soon to be known commonly as the River Route, a rallying point for North Side citizens for much of the expressway debate. With it, North Side leaders introduced what seemed to be a practical option, one that would allow the construction of the Mark Twain Expressway and thus satisfy desires to eliminate downtown congestion and provide land for industrial expansion. The option would also spare North Side communities from destruction and, in the groups' perspective, resulting blight. To the opposition, the River Route simply made more sense than the Elliott route.

A route bordering the river also seemed logical to North Side protestors because it had been already been studied by experts, giving it a needed sense of legitimacy amid the postwar consensus. Such a river route had been considered as part of the 1944 bond issue

[7] "Mass Meeting Tonight At St. Englebert's," *North St. Louis Community News*, December 17, 1952.



Figures 1 and 2: Proposed Expressways, 1944 and 1947. Expressways are marked by solid black lines, Source: *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

concerning postwar planning (see figure 1), but it was the general route outlined in the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947 North Side residents pointed to for inspiration (see figures 2).[8] Regardless, the State Highway Commission claimed there was a better choice. In the 1951 Elliott Plan, the commission surveyed the 1947 outline as one of three alternates and acknowledged that it would require minimum destruction of property and provide access to smaller airports in North St. Louis County. However, because it was more expensive and slightly longer, the commission denied it as the best option.[9]

Part of the cost incurred by the River Route would include the loss of current industries as well as the removal of vacant land zoned for industrial use. As one of the city's largest industrial zones, the north riverfront along Broadway contained a substantial number of industries. The rest of St. Louis's industries, as figure 3 shows, were located on riverfront south of downtown, around railroad tracks and highways such as the Mill Creek Valley west of downtown, or integrated into neighborhoods across the city.

The city severely lacked space for industrial expansion. What few tracts of land the city had were often spaced too far apart to assemble for new large industries. In an era when St. Louis was at its peak in population and density, the *Globe-Democrat* noted that within the city's borders "land for industrial use is scarce. There are only about 2,500 unused acres that are zoned for industrial plants." According to the report, "about 1,200

[8] "Streets and Trafficways Section," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947, Plate 19.

[9] Elliott Plan, 23.

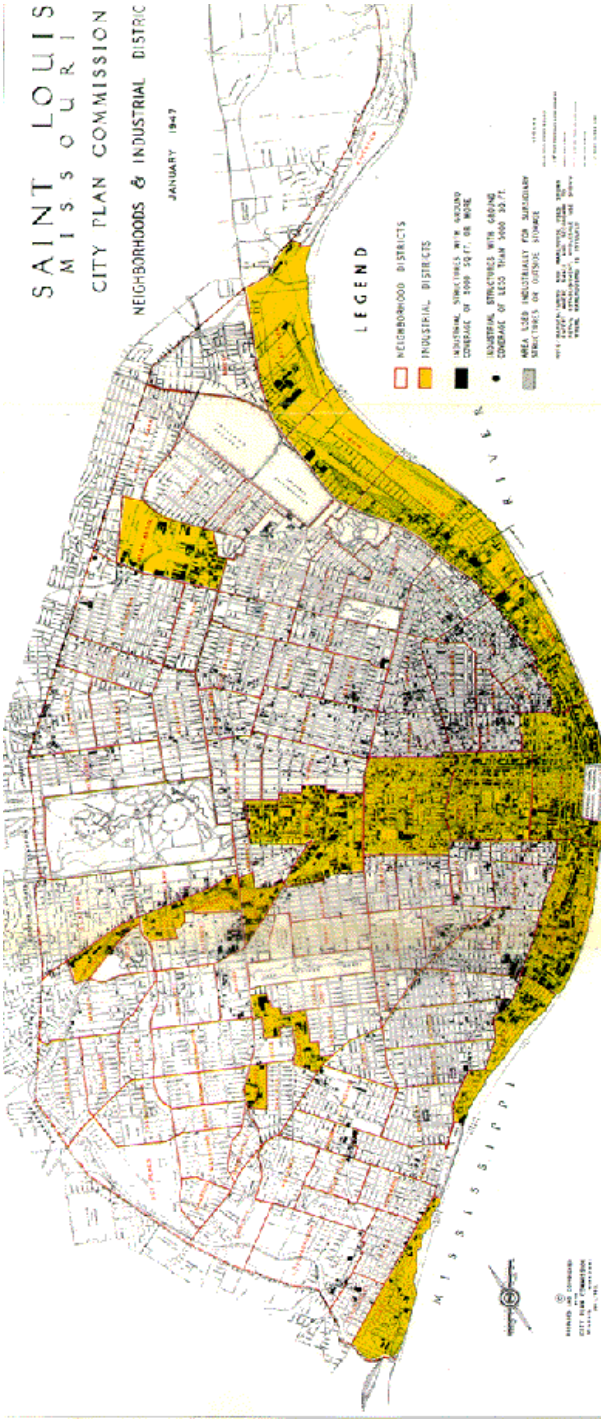


Figure 3: City Plan Commission Designations of Neighborhoods and Industrial Areas (highlighted) in St. Louis. Source: *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

acres [of unused land zoned for industry] are in the North Broadway [or north riverfront] area." [10] An expressway such as the proposed River Route through the north riverfront area would remove some of that vacant land. One of the goals of the expressway was to encourage industrial growth in St. Louis, not remove it.

Much of the North Broadway area along the riverfront was prone to flooding, as well, making an expressway there a harder sell. After requests made by Mayor Alloys Kaufmann in 1947 and the urgings of corporate interests, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would produce in 1954 a cost-benefit analysis on the possibility of protective levees for the area. The result would suggest that only areas with higher property values, such as extant industrial areas near downtown, should be protected.[11] The Elliott Plan acknowledged that, when placed on a levee and viaduct for flood protection, a river route could result in industrial development in the riverfront area, but the Corps of Engineers results found such a plan for levees to be impractical.[12]

The availability of industrial space in the politically separate county made these issues all the more pressing. "Not by choice, but by necessity, firms big and small can't help looking beyond the city limits" to St. Louis County, wrote John Costello of the *Globe-Democrat*.[13] With city's borders, fixed since 1876 to encompass only 61 square miles, nearly completely developed, companies could move their operations to the

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[10] Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 1, 1953.

[11] Andrew Hurley, "Environmental Hazards Since World War II," in Andrew Hurley, ed., *Common Fields: An Environmental History of St. Louis*, 246. Federal funding would be achieved in 1959, however, after heavy lobbying by corporate interests, including North Side corporations such as the St. Louis Car Company and Mallinckrodt Chemical Works. Hurley notes that the flood wall stopped where industry gave way to homes, 247.

[12] Elliott Plan, 23.

[13] Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 1, 1953.

seemingly endless amount of land in the county. For the city to compete effectively, industry needed to absorb the limited amount of vacant land available and "take place as much or more by reconversion of existing land uses."[14] Just as they had in numerous cities across the country, including Pittsburgh, downtown business leaders, in conjunction with planners and other agencies, pushed for the clearance and rebuilding of areas within the city limits, in part to encourage internal industrial expansion.

In April 1953, for example, the Associated Retailers of St. Louis, along with other groups including the Building and Construction Trades Council, would sponsor a pro-redevelopment rally in downtown. Highlighting how numerous groups with different backgrounds united at mid century to remake U.S. cities, the speakers included planners and real estate interests from Washington and Pittsburgh, as well as George C. Smith, president of the Metropolitan St. Louis Chamber of Commerce, and William H. Coibon and Paul W. Lashly from the St. Louis City Plan Commission. In preparation for the rally, Saul Dubinsky, president of Dubinsky Realty Co., who even served as chairman of the St. Louis City Plan Commission,[15] stated that "if St. Louis is to maintain a stable industrial-commercial economic base and promote the health and safety of its people, a [redevelopment] program…is now indispensable."[16]

Other studies would confirm that there was little room within the borders for industrial development and the necessary off-street parking and loading facilities in part because, as one Plan Commission report would note in 1955, "obsolete and blighted

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[14] "Land Use and Zoning: Imperative Need for Closer Relationship," *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947.

[15] Costello "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'*St. Louis Globe-Democrat*," February 1, 1953.

[16] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 8, 1953, 5A.

neighborhoods obstruct their development."[17] Planners emphasized that the difficulty of assembling large tracts of land could be solved by government acquisition through eminent domain and subsequently turning it over to private developers.[18] City leaders had already taken advantage of federal funding and state laws authorizing and funding this type of urban redevelopment, particularly for numerous housing projects.

Policymakers and their allies looked to those same federal laws to clear and redevelop three initial areas in part for industrial expansion. The 1949 Housing Act left control of redevelopment in the hands of local agencies, allowing for wide interpretation and implementation of regulations.[19] As long as housing units were provided elsewhere to replace those cleared, the land could be taken for industrial uses. The new sites, Kosciusko, along the south riverfront, the Market area west of downtown (also known as the Mill Creek Valley), and the O'Fallon area on the near North Side (not to be confused with the O'Fallon neighborhood adjacent to O'Fallon Park), showed St. Louis policymakers using federal laws and funding to help accomplish goals of clearing slums, encouraging industrial development, and protecting downtown.[20]

Expressways were a part of this comprehensive puzzle. In addition to providing access to the central business district, they could separate areas of different uses and property values. As the figure 4 shows, the central business district would be protected from all three areas (not to mention public housing complexes) by a relatively simple web

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[17] "Rebuilding Industry—Commerce In Saint Louis," Miriam W. Schmitt, report coordinator, City Plan Commission. Tucker Papers, Washington University Archives, St. Louis. Probably 1955. 4-5.

[18] Ibid., 6-7.

[19] Eugene J. Meehan, *The Quality of Federal Policymaking: Programmed Failure in Public Housing,* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1979), 3.

[20] Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,' " *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 1, 1953.

of radial and distributor expressways, with the Market area practically cordoned off completely. Thus many downtown leaders believed urban redevelopment, when undertaken with expressway construction, could alleviate threats to the city's industrial base and revitalize the central business district.[21]

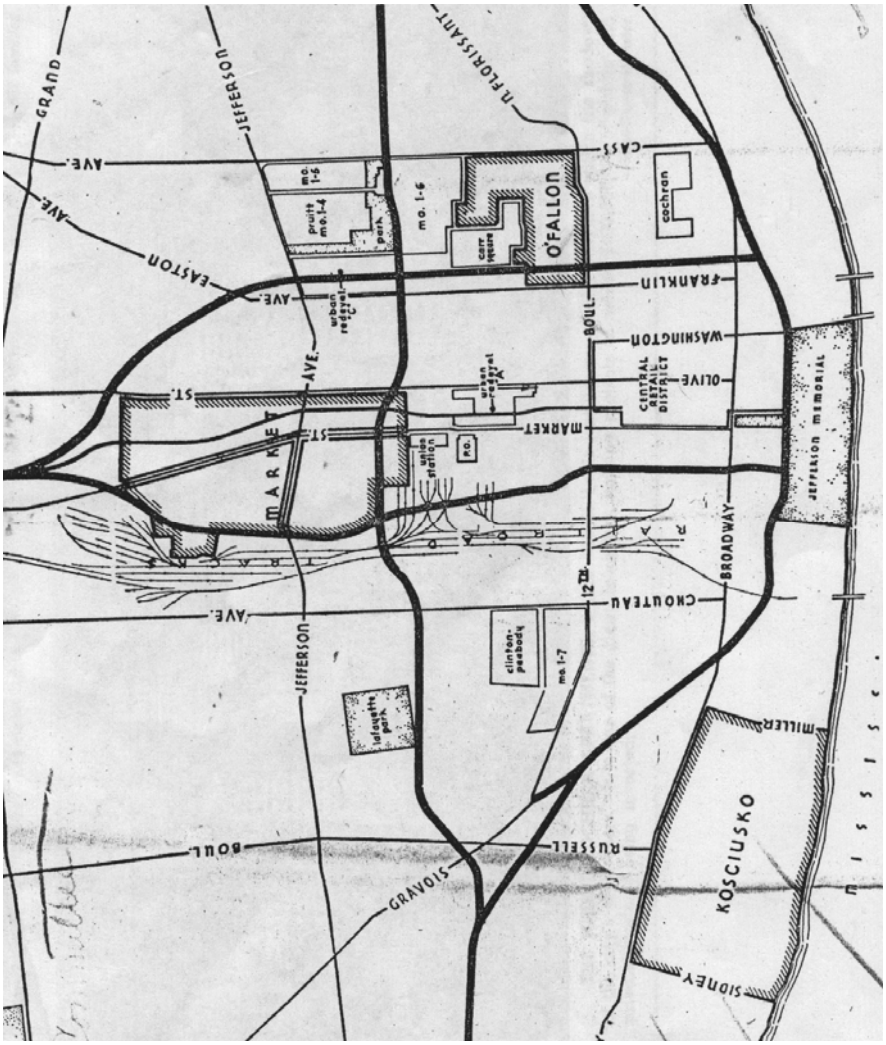

Figure 4: Proposed Pilot Areas for Redevelopment with Proposed Expressways. Source: *St. Louis Globe-Democrat,* February 1, 1953.

[21] Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat,* February 1, 1953.

Furthermore, the River Route would not serve the largest areas of population, the Elliott Plan claimed. The River Route would also "be approximately 2.5 miles longer than the recommended route, representing a loss of time of 3 to 4 minutes, in addition to the time lost by those who could not conveniently get on the expressway and would have to use city streets."[22] City streets slowed traffic and encouraged congestion. To the engineers, they appeared relatively obsolete compared to the new fast-paced superhighways, and served almost as obstacles for the engineers and drivers to overcome. Congestion would only hamper business.

Though neighborhood leaders argued a route along the river could solve many of the city's problems at once while saving private residential and commercial property, the River Route might not accomplish another primary motive of downtown business leaders and their allies: saving the central business district. Instead of focusing on faster travel times of workers and potential customers, the River Route emphasized protection of specific neighborhoods and property. In the growing postwar American consensus, where the anxiety of change and the optimism and faith in consumer goods such as automobiles dominated, it was difficult for downtown leaders to consider any route other than that which would help downtown the most. Therefore, they deemed the Elliott route the best.

North St. Louis Versus "Downtown Interests"

Regardless of official claims that the River Route was not feasible, the proposed Elliott route by late 1952 now had many groups of people working against it. By February 1953, the anti-expressway movement swelled to include many more community

[22] Elliott Plan, 23. One might ask, three or four minutes from where? While the source does not specify, it is likely referring to those driving from downtown to the suburbs or vice versa. The next sentence, however, indicates concern that drivers in the city will be stuck on city streets. Getting people to the expressways quickly and efficiently was of utmost importance.

and business organizations. On February 16 at Beaumont High School, another "throng" witnessed the largest collection yet of North Side groups deriding the Elliott route. (Beaumont, along with the other North Side public high schools, was still segregated at this point.) Petitions were distributed. The crowd of about 600 people heard speeches from representatives of previously involved groups, including Fred A. Niemoeller, president of the O'Fallon Improvement Association, who stated he was "unreservedly opposed to the Elliott line. Russell Schmitt of Northwest Improvement Association also spoke. New leaders, such as Msgr. Henry Schuermann of St. Englebert's Catholic Church, and new organizations, such as the West Walnut Manor Improvement Association, which represented residences and businesses in the northwestern portion of the city, officially joined the fight against the Elliott route.

Two prominent business groups, the West Florissant Avenue Merchants' Association and the North St. Louis Business Men's Association were now present at the meetings, a good indication of the detrimental effects they believed the expressway would have on North Side businesses. Arthur Keller of the North St. Louis Business Men's Association summed up the argument by stating in his speech that the expressway as proposed would hurt small businesses in North St. Louis in favor of corporations in the central business district.[23] One week prior to the Beaumont meeting, the *Community News* claimed that "Business men have expressed fear that such a construction would

[23] "Resolution Adopted Against Proposed Expressway at Mass Meeting Held Last Monday," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 18, 1953. As was the case with many speakers at the meeting, no quotes of Keller's speech were available in the paper, but instead were paraphrased by the writer. The North St. Louis Business Men's Association placed an ad in the paper on February 4, 1953 advertising the upcoming meeting.

hurt future business, guiding it straight to downtown," avoiding North Side businesses altogether.[24]

More business groups would agree, and by May they would be joined by the Northwest Business Men's Association and the Chouteau-Lindell Improvement Association.[25] The latter group represented an area of North St. Louis that would lose no homes (though possibly some business) if the Elliott Plan was realized. As a member group of the Council for Community Preservation, though, it worked with the other groups for their common interests.

But the West Florissant Avenue Merchants' Association arguably had much more at stake than some of the other business organizations. If constructed, the new expressway would parallel the active West Florissant Avenue commercial shopping district, but it would be too far away to provide higher levels of business traffic. Shoppers could instead quickly bypass the currently thriving area completely. To the merchants on West Florissant and members of the other groups, the expressway was yet another example of downtown working to the detriment of other parts of the city.

Business was generally still good on the North Side, though on a smaller scale. In the context of an early twenty-first century visit to the North Side, one would be shocked to realize how much more economically alive those neighborhoods were circa 1950. Just about any product the North Side consumer desired could be found nearby, making a trip to downtown rarely necessary. Despite the fact that so many political decisions concerning the North Side were made in downtown, North St. Louis was characterized by

[24] "Expressway Mass Meeting at Beaumont Feb. 16," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 11, 1953.

[25] "New Group Plans To Join Fight Against Highway," *North St. Louis Community News*, May 6, 1953.

communities that rarely needed to look beyond their own nebulous borders to the central business district.

Many North Side businesses were located at corner stores embedded in the communities, but most, but by no means all, were located along several commercial streets. For instance, at the East Grand shopping district—"At the Water Tower," as one ad proclaimed—one could buy hams and canned goods at the Walter Heidorn's IGA Supermarket or the Tower Supermarket just down the street. Residents could fill a prescription or get a Coke at Gassen's Drug Store or Clayton Pharmacy. Brand new television sets could be obtained at Watson Furniture and men could get their suits tailored at F.W. Sunner. Becker Radio Co. repaired radios, Rich Woltman sold jewelry, and the Shamrock and the Double Question Mark provided just two of countless taverns to stop at after work at the Krey Packing plant or Mallinckrondt Chemical Company; tavern patrons could enjoy a Falstaff or Hyde Park Beer, both brewed and bottled on the North Side.[26]

And that was just one very small segment of a larger collection of commerce, highlighting both the growing availability of consumer goods and Americans' ability to buy them. By another perspective this commercial activity only showed the growing threat outlying business districts in North St. Louis posed to downtown establishments. In addition to the very active strip on West Florissant Avenue in Walnut Park, the district on

[26] Many of these advertisements and announcements could be read multiple times and as much as each week throughout the early 1950s in the *North St. Louis Community News*. Much of the information included here, however, was taken mostly from weekly issues between January 10, 1951 and April 4, 1951, with the most substantial amount coming from January 10, 1951 and January 24, 1951. One longtime resident claimed there were 193 taverns in the 1940s and 1950s in the area bounded by Grand Boulevard to the northwest and west and Broadway to the east, probably corresponding with Murphy-Blair, Hyde Park, College Hill, and St. Louis Place; see John A. Vignali interview by Holly Hughes, November 8, 2002, Old North St. Louis Oral History Project.

North Fourteenth Street in Murphy-Blair had clothing stores such as Jacob Mange and Son. For shoes, customers could go to Rubenstein's Family Shoe Store or Otto and Joe's, and for jewelry they could go to Macades. There were more drugstores and furniture stores, as well as two chain department stores, Penney's and Sobel's. North Broadway, closer to the riverfront, was home to many stores, as was Salisbury Street in the Hyde Park area. Baden had a central shopping area as well.[27]

Each of these quarters competed with downtown department and specialty stores, and later with the suburban shopping centers, for the local dollar. The North Side merchants held the difficult yet rewarding position of not being in downtown. They generally had smaller buildings with a corresponding smaller variety of goods, but their locations in neighborhood districts ensured more affordable property prices and direct access to the local customer base. If business activity were the only factor by which to judge the North Side, than an expressway there was unnecessary.

Businessmen on the North Side had long made concerted efforts to build an economic advantage against the downtown behemoth, primarily by forming the North St. Louis Business Men's Association. The group, like other organizations of outlying businesses of its type across the United States, had done almost anything possible to win North Side commercial and industrial interests a competitive advantage.[28] The lavish and detailed promotional book, *Who's Who in North St. Louis*, published in 1925, not only attests to hard-won successes of which its members were proud and that they would work to protect, but their ambition to wrestle a greater market share from downtown businesses

[27] Ibid.

[28] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 35.

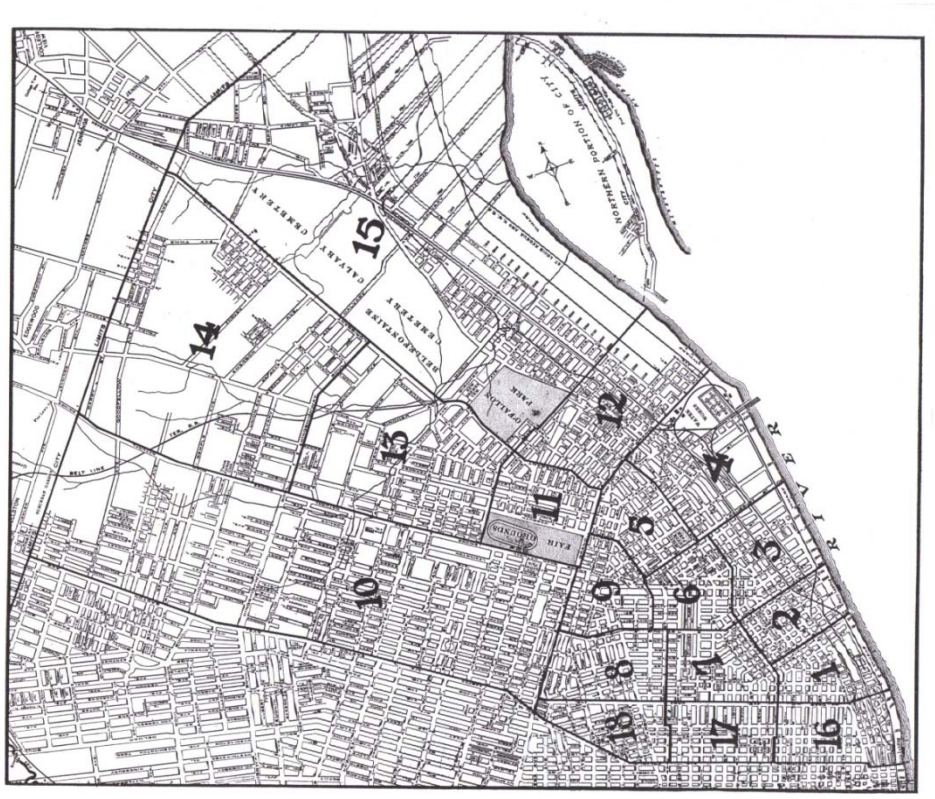

Figure 5: North Side Defined by the North St. Louis Business Men's Association, 1926. Notice large amounts of open land in the northwestern section. Source: *Who's Who in North St. Louis*.

as well. Most names in the book highlight the German heritage of the North Side at the time, and included retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, insurance agents, bankers, and lawyers. Real estate agents were involved in the group as well. By the 1950s, the NSLBMA claimed realtor and vocal expressway opponent William Eichenser as a member.[29] Figure 5 shows both the wide geographical reach of the NSLBMA and the structure of the organization, which divided the North Side into individual districts each led by their own representatives.

An expressway through North St. Louis, per the conventional wisdom accepted in downtown and in the outlying business districts alike (though downtown leaders would

[29] "Expressway Mass Meeting at Beaumont Feb. 16," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 4, 1953.

rarely admit it), would serve to benefit downtown at the expense of places like Salisbury Street, West Florissant Avenue, and North Fourteenth Street. Accordingly, groups such as the Baden Chamber of Commerce, the West Florissant Merchants' Association, the North St. Louis Real Estate Salesmen's Association, and the North 14th Street Business Men's Association joined the fight against the expressway.

Rhetorically, they deemed large civic projects such as the expressway and the people who proposed them "downtown interests." The debate surrounding an upcoming bond issue meant to provide $1.5 million for the Plaza redevelopment area in western downtown—where the city planned to clear a slum and build high-rise middle class housing—was just one example of this rhetoric on display. The measure drew both support and opposition from the North Side, but advertisements in the *Community News* stated that the council opposed the bond and the "committee of downtown interests" that wants to "throw out some 130 business firms employing some 700 people." The group also opposed the new taxes the project would require. "The outlying citizens have not been consulted," the ad proclaimed.[30] Behind all the rhetoric there was an obvious disconnection. The Elliott route would only widen that rift.

Aldermen would play extremely important roles in the movement too, as final approval of expressway routes would require a vote by the board. As early as October 1952, Everett Taylor of the twenty-seventh ward was the first North Side alderman to show opposition to the Elliott route. With the next citywide aldermanic elections set to be held in April 1953, other alderman would be required to take a position on this controversial issue. Perhaps noticing the political ramifications of the rising tide against

[30] Ad, *North St. Louis Community News*, September 23, 1953.

the route, three more North Side aldermen—Linton W. Peterson, Charles P. McBride, and Edgar J. Feely—openly joined the opposition by November 1952.[31]

Three of those aldermen, each from wards that would be affected by the expressway, spoke at the February 16 meeting. Alderman Everett Taylor stated that residents would be pushed into "high-rent areas or into high-priced homes in the county." Taylor, perhaps eyeing the upcoming election in April, touched on the popular tax issue—an issue the Council for Community Preservation used to oppose the Plaza bond issue. Because the city would lose the properties completely under miles of wide pavement, Taylor stated that the city would lose valuable property taxes.[32] Still, he failed to recognize or state that the businesses in downtown St. Louis produced two and a half times more in property taxes than they consumed in public services.[33] Twenty-first ward aldermen Charles P. McBride, whose ward encompassing Fairgrounds Park and parts of College Hill would be sliced in half by the Elliott route, pushed the election year rhetoric to a greater intensity by stating that he was "violently opposed to the [proposed] route."[34]

The rhetoric produced on both sides of the expressway debate needed outlets in order to drum up city-wide support, and the endorsement of the local press was in the early 1950s the most effective agent for realizing change. Promoters of civic improvements generally worked through the downtown daily newspapers, the *Post-*

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[31] "Walnut Park Ass'n Protest Meeting Tonight," *North St. Louis Community News*, November 12, 1952; "North Side Group Voices Disapproval Of Highway Plan," *North St. Louis Community News* December 10, 1952.

[32] "Resolution Adopted Against Proposed Expressway at Mass Meeting Held Last Monday," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 18, 1953.

[33] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 241.

[34] "Resolution Adopted Against Proposed Expressway at Mass Meeting Held Last Monday,"*North St. Louis Community News*, February 18, 1953.

Dispatch and the *Globe-Democrat*, to secure public approval. Despite their history as competitors, those papers generally moved in lock-step with pro-progress improvement backers, devoting significantly cheery coverage of their efforts to promote industrial expansion and arrest decay, with the "Progress or Decay?" series serving as a singular example. Expressways, as part of those improvements, received substantial coverage and support from both papers in the early 1950s.

On the North Side, the opposition to the Elliott route needed an outlet other than the downtown dailies spread their message. They found an excellent ally in the *North St. Louis Community News*. From the beginning of the debate in the fall of 1952 onward, the paper's editor, Catherine G. Huneke, of H.E. Huneke Publications, Inc., appeared to be playing an active role against the Elliott route, though that fact would not be explicit for months. The circumstantial evidence was apparent immediately, though. Stories concerning the expressway were presented boldly, usually with distressed headlines, with few conflicting viewpoints within the same articles to give them balance. Maps of the route were printed and sold by the newspaper "as a public service" and readers were urged to "keep them for future reference."[35]

Editorials in the *Community News*, which by the mid 1950s had a circulation of 70,000,[36] derided the expressway while subscribing to the postwar consensus. One in particular claimed that an expressway was "necessary in North St. Louis to alleviate traffic congestion and ensuing accidents and inconvenience," but North Side residents who would lose their homes should be paid more and renters should have better options

[35] *North St. Louis Community* News, January 14, 1953.

[36] "'The News' Increases Circulation To 70,000 With This Issue," *North St. Louis Community News*, April 13, 1955.

than housing projects if they are forced to leave "a neighborhood they prefer." By expressing how a high-speed highway would serve the common good and attacking the road at the same time, the editorial writer walked a tightrope that could threaten her position.[37]

As the turnout at the mass meetings and the "countless requests for maps of the recommended Mark Twain Expressway" suggested, providing the maps both met demand and encouraged citizen involvement.[38] The newspaper's offices on North Florissant Avenue and on Grand Avenue were located close to the proposed path, and possibly would be removed for the right-of-way. Urban historian Raymond A. Mohl, when writing about later highway revolts in the 1960s, notes that for a highway revolt to succeed, it needed, in part, the support of elected officials and the press.[39] With consistent activism, committed local leaders, and the *Community News*, the opposition to the Elliott route had some of the necessary ingredients for success. Accordingly, the newspaper claimed that any letter mailed to the *Community News* about the "expressway problem will be published."[40]

Citizens in North St. Louis responded. Letters to public officials were visible facets of the Mark Twain Expressway fight, and from early 1953 onward, letters to the editor played roles as well. In March 1953, the *Community News* began the occasional

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[37] Editorial, "How About The Expressway?" *North St. Louis Community News*, January 7, 1953.

[38] Editorial, *North St. Louis Community News*, January 28, 1953.

[39] Raymond A. Mohl, "Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities," *Journal of Urban History* 30 (2004): 676.

[40] Editorial, "How About The Expressway?" *North St. Louis Community News*, January 7, 1953.

practice of publishing letters from citizens on the front page; the first letter set the template for those that followed.

Assailing the Elliott route and its designers, the writers, Virginia and Sam Palazzolo, attested to the sanctity of homeownership in North St. Louis neighborhoods, where owning a home was something many people were unable to afford. Those who could buy homes held on to them with intensity. "Whom but God, has the right to take from any man, the core of his being—his home?" the Palazzolos asked. For many people, their homes were "a work of a lifetime," and some were too old to get credit to move anywhere else.[41] The Palazzolo home on West Lee Avenue northwest of Fairgrounds Park was located directly in the proposed expressway route. Trading their own "work of a lifetime" to save "six minutes to pamper a lazy body" of the suburban commuter was wrong. Echoing the Cold War context and attacking decision-makers on clearly understood terms, they asked "are we to be reduced to totalitarianism? This is a harsh word, but the proposed actions smack of it."[42]

The Palazzolos, like *Community News* editorial concerning the expressway, were also constrained by accepting the same rhetoric—namely progress—they attacked. "Do not misunderstand," they continued, "we do not want to retard the progress of a great city, but we resent the sacrifice of several thousands of hearts on the altar of progress." The letter was typical of most protest letters published in the *Community News*. Many others would use colorful language assailing destruction of property in their neighborhood, but would also try to reassure decision-makers that they were not against

[41] Letter to the Editor, *North St. Louis Community News*, March 4, 1953.

[42] Ibid.

expressways and thus progress.[43] That strategy could hamstring any "violent" opposition. Progress was so engrained in public discourse that it was impossible to deny it even when fighting it—signaling that the protesters could, whether they realized it or not, compromise.

In another letter, Hyde Park-Montgomery area resident Hope McClellan, appealed to decision-makers by pointing out the historical roots and richness of the North Side communities amid the changes of the postwar era. She, like the Palazzolos, would likely lose her residence if the Elliott route were constructed as proposed. "Sacrifice and hardships enabled us to purchase land, build our homes, schools and churches, which we have maintained long before the advent of the automobile," she wrote. "Is this justice?" she asked. "I have lived my whole life in my present location, where I want to have a home as long as I live."[44]

McClellan stated that the River Route would work well because it would be located on "so much old property and vacant land." She also presented a rather unique argument. St. Louis, from the decline of steamboat traffic and the rise of the railroad in the nineteenth century, had been slowly abandoning its old economic lifeblood, the Mississippi River. The best evidence of that fact was the Works Progress Administration-sponsored clearance of the old warehouse district in the 1930s for a westward expansion memorial. McClellan believed the river's possible aesthetic qualities could be emphasized. Referring to Chicago's Lake Shore Drive, she claimed a river route would make the riverfront "as desirable as Chicago with her lake front, which would result in

[43] "Expressway Mass Meeting at Beaumont Feb. 16," *North St. Louis Community News*, March 4, 1953.

[44] Letter to the Editor, *North St. Louis Community*, March 18, 1953.

business, invite industry and make St. Louis a city in which folks would want to live."[45] To McClellan, these points made the River Route the most logical option.

Options other than the Elliott route or the River Route existed, as well. McClellan suggested that the city consider a subway similar to the one in Boston. "IT CAN BE DONE," she implored.[46] Subways had been considered in previous years. In 1926, the Board of Public Service had submitted a subway plan to the Board of Alderman, but debate over taxes, what groups would benefit the most, and the city's relatively modest density (compared to larger cities such as New York and Chicago) and spread-out character of physical development had killed the plan by the 1930s.[47] By the early 1950s, streetcars, the dominant form of public transportation in the city, slowly declined in ridership and were eventually replaced by gasoline-powered buses. Postwar consensus had exalted the automobile as the dominant transportation mode in the United States, making millions of dollars for a subway extremely unlikely, and, in fact, no longer considered a viable option in St. Louis.

If there was opposition to a river route coming from North Side neighborhood residents it was not very vocal. In the 1960s, citizens in the city of New Orleans would take a different position on river routes when they would organize and shut down plans to build an elevated, Robert Moses-planned expressway between the French Quarter and the Mississippi River. Protesters would deem the aesthetic preservation of the city's

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[45] Letter to the Editor, *North St. Louis Community*, March 18, 1953.

[46] "Resolution Adopted Against Proposed Expressway at Mass Meeting Held Last Monday," *North St. Louis Community*, February 18, 1953.

[47] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 70, 92-94.

historical riverfront to be in the public interest.[48] A decade earlier in St. Louis, as automobile usage exploded, no such considerations for riverfront preservation were expressed either by downtown leaders or North Side protestors.

The proposed Mark Twain Expressway not only sparked long-existing divisions in the city rooted in its fragmentation, but in the county as well. Official resolutions by neighborhood groups and suburban governments further showed the political divide between the city and the county, or more specifically the city neighborhoods against the county and downtown business interests. For example, the suburban city of Jennings, passed a resolution officially voicing no objection to the Elliott-proposed route.[49]

Support for the Mark Twain Expressway in Jennings was likely due to the fact that it was site of the proposed Northland Shopping Center, a 64-acre "one-stop shopping" destination.[50] The shopping center would house up to thirty stores in one place in a low-density area, yet would be close enough by car and surrounded by a huge parking lot.[51] There were only eight such shopping centers in the United States in 1946, including a comparatively small one in South St. Louis city, Hampton Village, but in the next decade and a half the concept would take off dramatically.[52] These shopping centers posed a great threat to downtown department stores, making the perceived need for

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[48] Ricard O. Baumbach, Jr. and William E. Borah. *The Second Battle of New Orleans: A History of the Vieux Carre Riverfront-Expressway Controversy* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.,: University of Alabama Press, 1981).

[49] "Expressway Action Again Delayed by County Council," *North St. Louis Community News*, February, 25, 1953.

[50] "Resolution Adopted Against Proposed Expressway at Mass Meeting Held Last Monday," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 18, 1953.

[51] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 257.

[52] Ibid., 259.

expressways all the more urgent. Leaders in Jennings likely understood that the shopping center would substantially benefit from a nearby expressway, as its giant parking lot predicted. Just as important, the expressway encouraged the planning and construction of more large scale developments such as shopping centers.

The Chamber of Commerce of Baden, located only blocks from the proposed Northland Shopping Center, chose instead to adopt a resolution against the Elliott route. Led by Irving Galler, the business organization advocated several ideas, each of which could be seen as either logical or self-serving. The group supported the River Route, citing that it "would serve a dual purpose," as a road on top of a levee meant to protect the city from floods. Flood control was particularly important for Baden residents because of their proximity to the river. Once floods were controlled, the group claimed the road could serve as a catalyst to reclaim a thousand acres of land for industrial development. A highway along the river, Baden leaders believed, would stabilize existing communities and ensure future economic development.[53]

The proposed route would not require any demolition in Baden, unlike in many North Side communities that opposed the route, but located on the other side of the city's two largest cemeteries, it would not run close enough to their established businesses to benefit them directly. These physical barriers would shield Baden residents from most of the noise and air pollution and other perceived blighting effects of the expressway, but they would also make access to the new road difficult.

Most importantly, their businesses would be threatened by the new ones in the suburbs. The 1876 political separation of St. Louis city and St. Louis County ensured that

[53] "Baden C. of C. Adopts Resolution Against Mark Twain Expressway," *North St. Louis Community News*, March 11, 1953.

no tax revenue earned by Northland's numerous stores would benefit the Baden area or any other part of the central city. The political division had created a provincial, non-regional sense of competition among the region's business interests.

While it could be a sign of solidarity with other North Side neighborhoods or a genuine belief that a river route was best for the city, Baden's opposition to the proposed expressway was just as likely an unexpected consequence of the 1876 fixture of city-county boundaries. Members of the Baden Chamber of Commerce, with their official resolution against the Elliott Route, were fighting for their financial livelihoods not only against their competitors in downtown, but against a new threat located just blocks away as well.

The proposed Elliott route, therefore, seemingly did not benefit Baden at all, especially if one did not subscribe to the metaphor of downtown as the heart of the city, as many businessmen did. To make their point, some took on the language—sincerely or facetiously—of other North Side groups and reinforced historical divisions and the larger political consensus by doing so. The terms of debate had already been set. Instead of simply fighting a highway, they unconsciously began fighting what decision-makers had decided was good for the entire populace. Citing the removal of houses in the city in the way of the new road, Galler stated "we are not against 'progress' in any sense of the word," but the route was not progress in view of the housing shortage. Demonstrating the perceived overuse of vague rhetoric, such a common part of political discourse that all sides used to serve their own means, he went on to say, "It seems to me that some individuals are kicking this word 'progress' around like a football."[54]

[54] "Baden C. of C. Adopts Resolution Against Mark Twain Expressway,"*North St. Louis Community News*, March 11, 1953.

In March 1953, mayoral and aldermanic elections were approaching, and articles and ads showed candidates taking a stand on the proposed Elliott route, which appeared to be the most contentious issue of the election. Both candidates for alderman of the 21st ward ran ads pointing out their opposition to the Elliott route, and incumbent Charles McBride's ad repeated his defiant "violently opposed" comment. It further stated, in equally harsh rhetoric, "Let's Build and Improve North St. Louis…Not Divide, Abandon and Neglect It."[55]

Other ads for McBride pointed out opposition to downtown interests and to the forces of suburbanization. "The Darst Administration has neglected, divided and abandoned North St. Louis. Why?" it asked, referring to the current mayor, Joseph Darst. Going further, the ad asked the reader, "The largest employer in the 21st Ward is moving to the county. Why?"[56]

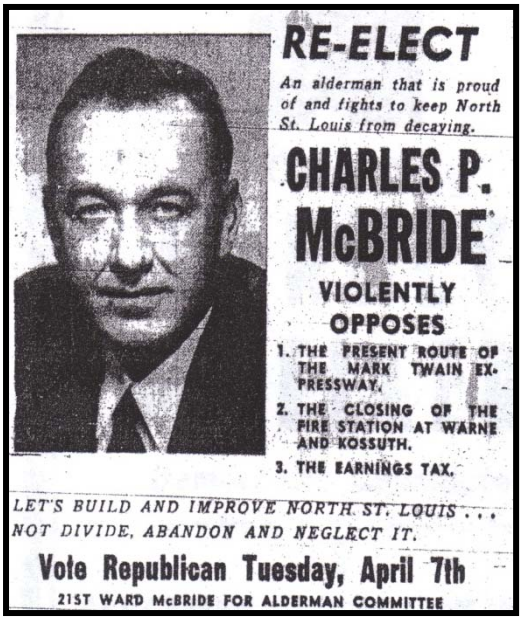
McBride, a Republican, was opposed in election by Democratic candidate Barney Mueller (see figures 6 and 7). Mueller also vocally opposed the Elliott route despite the fact that Mayor Darst was a Democrat and an expressway advocate, highlighting the disconnection between downtown and the outlying wards. As Russell Schmitt of the Northwest Improvement Association suggested, "certain influential individuals are determined [to use the route] regardless of the feelings of people directly involved."[57]

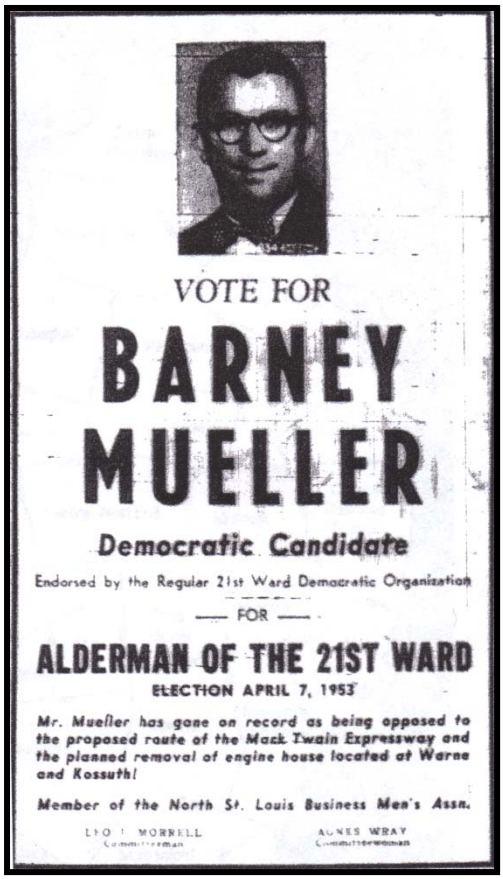
Official maneuvering against the expressway was waged by North Side representatives in Jefferson City, the state capital, as well. Since city leaders would

[55] Ad, *North St. Louis Community News*, March 3, 1953, 2, 2b.

[56] Ad, *North St. Louis Community News*, April 1, 1953, 5.

[57] "Expressway Mass Meeting at Beaumont Feb. 16," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 4, 1953.





Figures 6 and 7: Political Advertisements Expressing Anti-Expressway Rhetoric and Opposition to Downtown Interests. Source: *North St. Louis Community News*, April 1, 1953.

accept federal matching funds for right-of-way clearance and roadway construction that were to be administered by the state, which would officially own the highways, preventive measures at the state level could be the most effective option for rerouting the Mark Twain. State Representative Robert G. Walsh, former Democratic committeeman of the first ward,[58] had addressed the February 16 Beaumont mass meeting on the possibility of a river route. As meetings protesting the Elliott route continued in North Side neighborhoods, most often at the doomed St. Englebert's, Walsh discussed his intention to introduce a bill to the legislature that would prohibit demolition of homes and removal of tenants for construction of expressways.[59] The Mark Twain "speedway," Walsh noted, would serve the interests of the county and would require the destruction of 1800 to 2000 homes.[60] Two other representatives, John Lavin and John P. O'Reilly, who derogatorily deemed the expressway "the St. Louis County Turnpike," joined Walsh in opposition to the Elliott Plan.[61]

A similar technique—delaying displacement of tenants for highways through state legislative action—had been used just four years earlier in the debate over the Third Street Highway in downtown St. Louis, deemed the Webbe bill, after its sponsor, State Senator Anthony Webbe.[62] This was the first showdown concerning a civic project between a local representative and then-Mayor Joseph Darst. Darst was an extremely

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[58] "Anniversary of O'Fallon Park Protective Group," *Community News*, September 18, 1947.

[59] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 26, 1953.

[60] "Expressway Mass Meeting Friday Night, March 20," *North St. Louis Community News*, March 18, 1953; The other representative quoted was John P. O'Reilly

[61] "Walsh Bill Heard Last Monday by Roads Committee," *North St. Louis Community News*, March 25, 1953.

[62] "Bill Slowing Up 3rd St. Highway Could Cost City $8,500,000 in Aid," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 12, 1949.

ambitious mayor who spearheaded many of the large-scale civic projects that defined policy in St. Louis during the 1950s and 1960s. Modernization of streets, transportation, and housing were among his many goals to help St. Louis compete in the postwar era. He possessed a genuine belief that modern public housing was necessary to rescue St. Louis from the slums and stop blight.

The debate would continue for over two years, taking on a tenor very similar to that of the Mark Twain Expressway debate, though on a smaller scale, with Darst and the local business community pitted against a local alderman. The first bill, passed in 1949, put a two-year moratorium on the removal of tenants for all highway projects in Missouri, but an attempt by Webbe to renew the law ended when the bill was never finalized by the state legislature before the end of the session in mid-1951. The remaining tenants were moved later that year to new residences of their choice or to public housing. Eventually, the Darst-Webbe public housing projects would be built and named for the mayor and the protesting representative. Just as important, the failure of Webbe to extend the law allowed for the commencement of planning for the larger expressway system. It was likely no coincidence that the Elliott Plan was published just months after the death of the Webbe law.

The *Globe-Democrat* reported on the subsequent introduction of the Walsh bill, showing the highway fight was garnering some attention in downtown. However, the generally pro-expressway *Globe-Democrat* reported the event notably differently than the *Community News* did. Instead of portraying Walsh's action in a positive light, as the *Community News* did, the *Globe-Democrat* focused on the City Plan Commission's objection to Walsh's measure. With a headline that read, "Plan Commission to Oppose

Delay in Expressway," the *Globe-Democrat* expressed a pro-city government perspective on the Walsh bill.[63] The downtown dailies had reported on the Webbe bill in similar fashion in 1949, proclaiming "City To Oppose Delay On Third Street Highway."[64]

In April 1953, the Walsh bill was defeated 18 to 9 by the legislature's Roads and Highways Committee, but North Side opposition regrouped and continued the fight. The *Community News* reported that "for sometime, North St. Louis organizations have been screaming, evidently to deaf ears, the City Plan Commission's proposed route of 1947 would be more feasible." It went further to suggest, as some had before, a conspiracy emanating from the central business district, stating that opposition "to Walsh's bill, representatives of the city, many of whom were downtown business men . . . claimed the river route would not alleviate the traffic problem," but favored the Elliott route for their own selfish reasons.[65]

Walsh later introduced a second bill with the intention of giving homeowners the right to trial-by-jury if they were displeased with the amount of compensation they were given for their homes. William Eichenser stated that the Northwest Improvement Association would not relent and would "go ALL OUT" in opposition despite the setback. Considering that first tracts of land for expressway rights-of-way had been authorized by the city in early February and the recent defeat of the first Walsh bill,

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[63] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat,* March 26, 1953.

[64] Undated clipping, probably from *Post-Dispatch*, 1949; other articles on the subject with similar headlines included: "Bill Slowing Up 3rd St. Highway Could Cost City $8,500,000 In Aid," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 12, 1949; "Kill Webbe Bill, City C. of C. Urges Missouri House," *St. Louis Star-Times*, May 21, 1951. Further connecting highway politics to other issues in the postwar era, the right-of-way acquisition for the Third Street Highway displaced 500 to 1000 families, necessitating a new housing project, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 17, 1949.

[65] *North St. Louis Community News*, April 15, 1953.

Walsh and Eichenser expressed their concern that people would be confused, panic, and sell immediately.[66] Their fears also highlighted a certain air of inevitability regarding expressways in the postwar era. Once they were proposed, fighting them was perceived as increasingly futile by the general public and reactions were witnessed in the housing market. To avoid the perception of inevitability, Eichenser and the Council for Community Preservation continued to sponsor meetings in the coming months.

Signs of the times continued to add a greater sense of urgency on both sides of the debate. Suburban businesses increasingly advertised in the *Community News*, and at the end of the 1953 season even the beloved Browns left town (for Baltimore).[67] In that year, after owners St. Louis's other baseball team, the Cardinals, threatened to sell the team to out-of-town investors, August Busch of Anheuser-Busch Brewing purchased the team. The Cardinals would remain at Sportsman's Park (thereafter Busch Stadium) at Grand Boulevard and Dodier Avenue for the rest of the decade. Indicative of the explosion of automobile ownership in the postwar era, the owners of Bremen Bank, a North Side institution, razed the old mansion of early German immigrant Emil Mallinckrodt, father of the founders of Mallinckrodt Chemical Company, for a parking lot.[68]

Mayor Tucker and the Future of St. Louis

The April 1953 election was important not only because the victorious aldermen could influence the expressway and redevelopment debates, but also because it marked the change of mayoral administrations amid great changes for the city. Citing health

[66] *North St. Louis Community News,* April 15, 1953.

[67] Ibid., *The Sportsbeat* section.

[68] "Parking Lot Will Old Mallinckrodt Mansion," *North St. Louis Community News*, November 11, 1953.

concerns, Mayor Joseph Darst, who had served as mayor since 1949, did not run for reelection. Darst had been an extremely ambitious mayor, spearheading many of the dramatic measures that would come to define city policy for the next two decades. One candidate who ran to replace Darst was North Side Republican Clifford Haley. Haley had claimed that homeowners in North St. Louis would not get enough money for their land and many people were too old to move if the Mark Twain Expressway was built as proposed. For these reasons, it was not "progress" in his view. "We should not continue to drive out citizens under the guise of 'public improvement,'" he stated.[69] Haley was defeated in the Republican primary by fellow North Side politician Carl Stifel, who went on to face Democrat Raymond Tucker in the general election. Tucker disagreed with Haley, Stifel, and the North Side aldermen on the expressway issue. In fact he supported a sweeping agenda of progress favored by Darst.

Tucker, an effective and congenial man supposedly "above the political morass," was perfectly suited to get the job done politically. He had spent much of his career as a mechanical engineering professor at Washington University, so he could speak in detached authoritative terms. His past experience as the city's smoke commissioner in the 1930s and 1940s and his success at dealing with that previously unsolvable problem provided him with exceptional credentials—professional and technical expertise—needed to fix the multitude of dilemmas facing St. Louis in the 1950s. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* wrote that "as an engineer, Tucker considers himself particularly qualified to tackle the problems that will confront the city in the four years, particularly in regard to

[69] "Haley Assails Proposed Mark Twain Expressway," *North St. Louis Community News*, March 11, 1953.

housing, slum-clearance, installation of docks and warehouses, and establishment of adequate airport facilities."[70]

Tucker won the April 1953 election by a substantial margin. Much of his support came from the city's West End elite and the major newspapers. In part because he was not a product of the patronage system, he did not receive support from ward organizations such as those that dominated North Side politics.[71] Thus Tucker's goals were more in line with the influential business community than the outlying neighborhoods, but like Darst his engagement of enormous local social and economic problems showed he had civic betterment in mind.

Key to his success in the position, Tucker also possessed the necessary political skills to produce results. Publicly or in letters, he often invoked the good of the whole to deride opponents of civic projects such as expressways. His gentle—though in reality forceful—reminder that they were all working toward progress, and to stop it would be a travesty, was all the convincing that many local leaders needed to get on board. On other occasions, he relied on private meetings with the aldermen to make his points and seek compromise.[72]

He also used republican rhetoric to quiet protests from individual citizens. One resident, William L. Craig, would write the mayor concerning the fate of his property in

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[70] Stein, *St. Louis Politics*, 89, 111.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Board of Public Service President Frank J. McDevitt to Tucker. April 30, 1954, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder. A new route needed approval, in part, by the Board of Aldermen. McDevitt suggested the mayor personally meet with one alderman, Everett J. Taylor of the twenty-seventh ward, who still had "some reservations concerning this Route as it affects his ward." He went on to say, "In other words, if we can get Alderman Taylor 'ironed out', then there is no reason why the Ordinance cannot be prepared and introduced." Tucker also met with all the alderman from affected wards on June 23, 1954 in his office. Edward N. Golterman to Carl Gassel. June 15, 1954. All others C.Ced.

South St. Louis. Tucker, showing his deft skills at bringing people into the fold, responded by saying, "You asked me what I would do if my home were to be affected by the Ozark Highway. You have answered this question for me yourself by saying that I would not be in favor of the proposed route under such circumstances," but in the end "I have always endeavored to be guided by the principle that the greater good of all the people is superior to the individual interest."[73] By working aggressively to sway politicians and public opinion in favor of large-scale improvements, Tucker was a perfect fit for the local community of prominent businessmen, not to mention planners.

The expressway fight stretched to Board of Aldermen meetings in downtown. As projects were approved, divisions hardened. By a 17 to 11 vote, the board ordered the construction of the Third Street Highway, the original much smaller expressway downtown that Darst had pushed, to 8th and Mullanphy Streets in the Murphy-Blair neighborhood. From there it would link up with the Elliott-proposed Mark Twain Expressway through North St. Louis. Democrat Barney Mueller had defeated Republican Charles McBride in the April election for twenty-first ward alderman, but his position, as previously noted, remained steadfastly against the Elliott line, even as a member of Tucker's political party. Twenty-seventh ward Alderman Everett Taylor, the first alderman to speak out against the Elliott route, was joined in "violent opposition" by five other North Side aldermen, including Mueller.[74] Nevertheless, in early July 1953, the St. Louis Board of Public Service approved a half-mile portion of the Elliott Mark Twain Expressway route through the northwest portion of the city. Highlighting the degree to

[73] Tucker to William L. Craig, March 22, 1957, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[74] *North St. Louis Community News*, June 30, 1953.

which property owners led the opposition to the proposed route, this section, the paper reported, was free of controversy because the area was little developed.[75]

After witnessing similar fights in the 1950s, urbanist Jane Jacobs wrote about this tactical perspective of local communities against expressways and how professionals and politicians typically reacted. "What the citizens really attack is the *specific* destruction that will be wrought on their homes, their streets, their businesses, their community," she wrote, certainly emblematic of the situation of North St. Louis in the 1950s. "Often their localized minor elected officials turn up to join the protest; if they did not, they would never be elected again," she explained.[76]

That held true for St. Louis as well. Aldermen throughout St. Louis typically supported expressways if they were routed in other areas, but would vociferously oppose them if they were routed through the wards they represented. In the fight that would occur over the routing of Interstate 44 through South St. Louis neighborhoods in 1960, four aldermen, all from wards through which the highway would pass, would sternly vote against the proposal that would divide their neighborhoods. The protesting aldermen would not be supported in their fight by North Side aldermen, who just six years earlier had mounted a similar campaign (see Appendix).[77]

The concept of "downtown interests" in the 1950s was part myth, part reality. While an influential and often wealthy elite dominated city politics from early colonial days to the early twentieth century, its power by mid century was somewhat diluted by

[75] "Part of Expressway Plan Approved, *North St. Louis Community News*, July 8, 1953.

[76] Jacobs, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*, 358; emphasis in original.

[77] "The Highway That's a Hot Potato," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 6, 1960.

fragmentation and ill-will coming from patronage-supported ward organizations. The Big Cinch, an influential group of elites who controlled politics in the last decades of the nineteenth century from their West End private places and corporate offices downtown, had largely faded from the scene, many having moved westward to the county. Past efforts at civic improvement by Civic League reformers, as well as the divisive "good of the whole" versus "selfish interests" rhetoric they expressed—not to mention the business leaders' ability to move their companies wherever they chose, taking tax revenue with them—ensured that policymakers would continue to look for ways to accommodate downtown interests.

St. Louis was not the only city experiencing threats to its population, commercial, and industrial base. By the early 1950s, spurred by federal housing and highway legislation and influenced by aggressive efforts already made in New York, many cities formed redevelopment agencies or civic groups to make their projects become realities. Reflecting both who had the power to accomplish those goals and who would benefit directly, the groups usually included a mix of professionals, political leaders, and prominent businessmen.

Perhaps the most famous case of leaders in commerce and industry uniting with public officials and planners to revive a city is that of mid-twentieth century Pittsburgh. Following World War II that city, long-dominated by heavy polluting industries such as steel, increasingly witnessed economic decentralization, industrial out-migration, suburbanization, and declining property values. Led by prominent bank chairman Richard K. Mellon, one of the world's richest men, a wide-ranging coalition of business executives, planners, and academics formed the Allegheny Conference on Community

Development with the primary goal of facilitation of civic projects intended to reverse those trends, such as slum clearance and expressways.[78] Because realization of those projects necessitated open and productive bridges between the local community of bankers, retailers, and other businessmen and representatives of various levels of government, the conference joined forces with the local political machine, led by Mayor David L. Lawrence.[79]

Together, increases in private and public investments were their ultimate goals—what interstate highway historian Mark H. Rose calls a virtual "social and economic revival of Pittsburgh"—as well as, but certainly not limited to, more parking and faster travel times for commuting drivers approaching the central business district. Many of the individual problems the group tackled were similar to those in St. Louis: smoke, flood control, rehabilitation of poor dwellings, and industrial expansion. By working to clear, rebuild, and revive the southwestern edge of downtown, the Golden Triangle, they intended to remake Pittsburgh as a good place to do business.[80] In St. Louis, policymakers and business leaders wished to do the same thing.

Large-scale civic improvements, usually influenced by positive environment-talism, had been advocated by the wealthy and influential in St. Louis at least since the 1890s. The Civic League had pushed for numerous improvements in the early twentieth century, usually appropriating progressive rhetoric when campaigning for them. Business interests also played a role in proposing expressways, and evidence suggests that their

[78] Rose, *Interstate*, 58.

[79] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 366.

[80] Rose, *Interstate*, 58.

ideas influenced the Elliot Plan to a significant degree. For example, in 1944 the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce had produced a pamphlet entitled "Styled Highways of Tomorrow." Among the improvements, the group had recommended the construction of three expressways that would converge on downtown. In many ways, the three expressways were very similar to those recommended by the Elliott Plan, and one was nearly identical to the one designed in 1951 by engineers.[81]

The most recent redevelopment proposals for St. Louis would "follow Pittsburgh's Blueprint" and were initiated in part by the aforementioned expert-led Industrial and Commercial Development Committee in 1953.[82] The somewhat diverse group comprised of planners, realtors, architects, and engineers showed the convergence of numerous interests in the postwar era. The status of many of these individuals as experts ensured that their voices would be heard and considered, but ultimately the powerful local business community would need to become involved to facilitate expressway and redevelopment plans. After all, they would benefit directly from these public improvements.

In early 1953, using Pittsburgh as inspiration, Mayor Darst organized a group of eight prominent businessmen from St. Louis to discuss how issues facing the city would be addressed and funded. The resulting group, Civic Progress, Inc. would be a "permanent civic organization" consisting primarily of influential local businessmen and professionals. Through assistance to existing organizations and facilitation of local projects, Civic Progress would serve in a capacity similar, though not identical, to the

[81] Elliott Plan, 11.

[82] Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 1, 1953.

Civic League of the early twentieth century, as well as Pittsburgh's Allegheny Conference. In this way, it would be St. Louis's "'civic conscience.'"[83]

Civic Progress provided an official and ostensibly benevolent mechanism by which to accomplish the shared goals, outlined by planners and engineers, of the mayor and the powerful downtown business community. It was formed in part to advocate the construction of expressways in the city to revitalize the central business district, what *Globe-Democrat* reporter John Costello called "a mere square mile [that] puts up one dollar out of every four that flows into the coffers of City Hall."[84] St. Louis, Civic Progress promotional literature stated, was "behind most other large American cities," in money for capital improvements. Many other cities already "had post-war expressways built or nearly so" and "had built huge underground garages." The city "can grow and progress through a more intensive use of land within its boundaries. This kind of progress is only possible through a continuous expenditure of money for worthwhile capital improvements—for express highways, housing, and business and industrial facilities."[85]

Immediately following his election in April Mayor Tucker began work to make his agenda a reality, part of which meant using the existing channels to help persuade the public. In the first months of his administration, he expanded Civic Progress. In his letter to individuals nominated for membership, Tucker wrote, using common rhetoric and buzzwords of the postwar urban scene, "we face staggering problems of slums and blight and traffic congestion." Essentially, he concluded, "St. Louis has passed through the grim

[83] "A new approach to old problems …CIVIC PROGRESS, INC." February 2, 1954 found in Tucker Papers, Series 5, Civic Progress, Inc..

[84] Costello, "New Plans for Giving St. Louis a 'Face Lift,'" *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 1, 1953.

[85] Pamplet, Fleishman, Hillard & Associates, "A new approach to old problems…CIVIC PROGRESS, INC.," February 2, 1954, 8, found in Tucker Papers, Series 5, Civic Progress, Inc.

preliminaries of decay," and only drastic measures could change the dire situation. "This is our last and best chance to head our city back in the opposite direction…toward the inevitable future."[86] Responses to the nominations for Civic Progress were affirmative and enthusiastic. Sidney R. Baer of Stix, Baer and Fuller wrote that he would do all he could "to further the progress of St. Louis."[87]

Members of the newly expanded Civic Progress, approximately 25 men, were distinguished by their wealth and social positions. They included the heads of St. Louis's major corporations, banks, and departments, as well as lawyers, a former mayor, and a university chancellor (see figure 8). They were the city's exclusive elite in the 1950s—a virtual, though less powerful, version of the Big Cinch.[88] This comparison is apt, as rhetoric coming from the neighborhoods and outlying business districts accused "downtown interests" as working against the rest of the city. But times had changed. While the *Post-Dispatch* had roundly attacked The Big Cinch, with accurate specific examples of corruption, the downtown dailies, per the growing pro-progress consensus, scrutinized Civic Progress very little during the 1950s. Perhaps the "good of the whole" rhetoric they expressed made them seem much more benevolent.

Publicly, Civic Progress members expressed republican rhetoric, in which private interests would be rejected and the good of the whole would be served by their projects, as the organization's official by-laws attest: "The Association shall be operated without pecuniary gain or profit whatsoever incidental or otherwise to any of its members. . . . No

[86] Tucker to Prospective Civic Progress, Inc. Members, June, 5, 1953. Simply signed "Mayor," it is unclear if this is the same letter sent to the original members, as some letters from responding individuals indicate these words were attributed to Joseph Darst.

[87] Baer to Tucker, June 6, 1953, Tucker Papers, Civic Progress, Inc. Folder.

[88] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 495.

part of [Civic Progress's] activities shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation in any manner."[89]

***Figure 8*:**
Civic Progress Membership,
Early 1950s

David Calhoun	**St. Louis Union Trust**
J.W. McAfee	**Union Electric**
Powell McHaney	**General American Life Insurance**
Ethan A.H. Shepley	**Washington University**
Sidney R. Baer	**Stix, Baer, and Fuller**
Arthur Blumeyer	**Bank of St. Louis**
James Douglas	**Lawyer**
Alloys Kaufmann	**Former St. Louis Mayor**
August Busch, Jr.	**Anheuser-Busch**
Donald Danforth	**Ralston-Purina**
Morton D. May	**May Co. (Famous-Barr)**
Edgar M. Queeny	**Monsanto Chemical**
Sidney Maestre	**Mercantile Trust**
William McDonnell	**McDonnell Aircraft**
Tom K. Smith	**Boatmen's Bank**
Edgar Rand	**International Shoe**
Clarence Turley	**Turley Corp. (real estate)**
Edwin Clark	**Southwestern Bell Telephone**
Howard F. Baer	**A.S. Aloe Shoe**

Source: Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 493.

Still, some members privately expressed their views concerning power in St. Louis in ways that likely would have been ill-received if made public. "I have always felt," wrote Morton D. May of May Department Stores, parent company of Famous-Barr, "that the big money interests of St. Louis must have direct representation in the membership of Civic Progress, Inc. if the job is to be accomplished."[90] The "job," as

[89] By-laws of Civic Progress, Inc.: Article III: "Nature of Association," found in Tucker Papers, Series 5, Civic Progress, Inc.

[90] Morton D. May to Tucker, June 8, 1953, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

implied, referred to the improvements downtown businessmen pushed to save their investments in the city, not specific requests coming from outlying neighborhoods.

Together, Tucker and the initial members of Civic Progress considered expanding the exclusive group to contain over one hundred members from numerous parts of the St. Louis community. Pittsburgh's Allegheny Conference, the template St. Louisans were striving to emulate, was a large organization of that type. Civic Progress members even traveled to Pittsburgh to see firsthand how that group functioned.[91] At one point in September 1953, at least 499 names were listed in internal memos as possible new members. The list was surprisingly inclusive, though corporate and professional interests dominated.

Of the nearly five hundred individuals and organizations considered for membership, the largest number, 236, came from local corporations and downtown business. Representatives of the North Side's largest corporations, such as Joseph Fistere of Mallinckrodt Chemical Company, brewers Alvin and Edward J. Griesedieck, John F. Krey of Krey Packing, W.B. McMillan of Hussman Refrigerator Company, and J.D. Rhoades, plant manager of the northwest St. Louis Chevrolet plant, were listed as well. The list also included 13 architects, 18 contractors, 13 doctors and directors from prominent hospitals, 15 educational leaders, 27 labor leaders, 45 lawyers, 14 engineers (including Bartholomew), 24 individuals from print, radio, and television media, 43 professional and trade organizations, 18 public officials (including Mayor Tucker), 15

[91] Fleishman-Hillard and Associates, "The Oct. 26-27 Trip of Civic Progress, Inc. to Pittsburgh, PA." 1953, found in Tucker Papers, Series 5, Civic Progress, Inc.

religious leaders, and 17 women's clubs (though no individual women were listed at all). Also indicated were numerous substitutions and deletions.[92]

As a testament to the inclusiveness of the group, Civic Progress members considered Harry Huneke, publisher of the *North St. Louis Community News*, and 25 different neighborhood associations for membership. Six of those organizations were currently actively working against the proposed route of the Mark Twain Expressway. Whether the inclusion of the North Side groups and leaders was a sincere effort to unite the city is unclear, but just as likely Tucker understood it would be helpful in quieting their protests.[93]

Once word was out that new members were being considered, numerous individuals wanted to be a part of the exclusive group. The executive secretary of the St. Louis Real Estate Board wrote to current member Powell B. McHaney, "our board has a vital interest in civic progress in St. Louis," and should be represented in the group.[94] One enterprising individual, in the interest of being appointed executive director of Civic Progress, sent his extensive resume and even pointed out that he was "married (two children)."[95]

This was exactly the civic involvement Darst and, now, Tucker wanted Civic Progress to encourage, but there is no indication that anyone of lower social status

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[92] Memo, "Proposed Members of Civic Progress, Inc.," September 30, 1953, Fleishman, Hillard & Associates, found in Tucker Papers, Series 5, Civic Progress, Inc.

[93] Ibid. The publisher's last name was misspelled as "Hunneke" on the memo.

[94] St. Louis Real Estate Board to Powell B. McHaney, October 30, 1953, Tucker Papers, Series 5, Civic Progress, Inc.

[95] John E. Riley to Tucker, September 17, 1953, Tucker Papers, Series 5, Civic Progress, Inc. The man's mention of his family status highlighted the growing emphasis on nuclear families in the post-World War II era.

achieved such a prominent position in that group. Future lists of considered members, for whatever reason, would not include the neighborhood associations.[96] In fact, Civic Progress members would decide not to expand the group and instead to keep it relatively small. This would ensure that the decision-making process would be limited to a small influential clique.

After initial membership was set, Civic Progress divided into numerous committees, each focusing on a different problem faced by the city. The Streets and Highways Committee included Edwin M. Clark of Southwestern Bell and David R. Calhoun of the St. Louis Union Trust, and, as its chairman, department store magnate Sidney R. Baer. Baer played an active role in facilitating expressway development. In reference to the Mark Twain and Ozark expressways, he wrote, "As I have said many times over a period of years, the completion of this great artery . . . in my judgment will be the key to the stabilization of downtown St. Louis."[97]

Expressways, Baer suggested, would also bring "much traffic in to the downtown district," which would help businesses there, but they would also "take off of the streets in the downtown area, according to estimates of engineers, about 14,000 vehicles a day, both those coming into the downtown district and many passing through it."[98] The contradiction—that expressways could bring traffic but also relieve traffic—was extremely hopeful at best. Overwhelming faith in the automobile and experts' claims that congestion would only worsen in the coming years if expressways were not built clouded

[96] "Partial List of Persons to Be Invited [to Mass Meeting for Civic Progress, Inc.]," February 4, 1954, Tucker Papers, Series 5, Civic Progress, Inc. Each invitee was encouraged to use his personal parking pass when attending the meeting.

[97] Baer to Tucker, December 23, 1954, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[98] Baer to Tucker, January 29, 1954, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

their judgment. The automobile was both the problem and the solution to their problems. Even an influential leader from the North Side agreed with Baer. Alloys P. Kaufmann, former mayor and newly-elected president of the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce, placed "more express highways" on his list of needs for the city in 1953.[99]

It would be as incorrect to suggest that all downtown-based businessmen possessed the exact same backgrounds, beliefs, and motivations as to suggest that neighborhoods could be reduced to simplistic grades. Many did not base their companies in downtown, and some had little practical or direct concern for the revitalization of the central business district. McDonnell Aircraft, headed by Civic Progress member William McDonnell, already had a home in the suburbs. Heated debate, with some members expressing feelings bordering on betrayal, occurred within the Civic Progress ranks when Edgar M. Queeny informed other members that he was considering moving his company, Monsanto Chemical, to St. Louis County.

They all agreed on expressways though. Expressways, many thought, could keep companies from leaving the city. Those that had left the city—or planned to do so—saw expressways as crucial connections linking their businesses to others. While McDonnell's support for the bond issue was surely influenced by other factors, it is worth noting that the Mark Twain Expressway, as proposed, would run directly adjacent to the McDonnell company headquarters in the county.

Throughout the debate, St. Louis's corporate business community proved formidable opponents to improvement and business associations on the North Side. It would also wield substantial influence over the planning process. If there was any doubt

[99] *North St. Louis Community News*, August 19, 1953.

of that fact, one need not look any further than the Elliott-designed route taken by the Ozark Expressway through South St. Louis. Like the North Side Mark Twain Expressway, it would possess several noticeable curves, with the most obvious of them occurring just south of the Soulard neighborhood. If decision-makers wanted to encourage the growth of industry in the city, they knew all too well not to negatively impact the largest of its kind in the city. It is no wonder that the Ozark Expressway, from its Elliott-proposed route to its construction, would veer to the west just north of the Anheuser-Busch Brewery and resume its course just south of it. Indicative of his influence, August A. Busch, Jr. served as chairmen of the board of Civic Progress, Inc.[100]

[100] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 493.

Chapter IV

Making the Expressway:
Civic Improvement and the Last Days of Protest on the North Side

Up until this point in 1953, it was unclear if the protest from North St. Louis deriding the Elliott route were having any effect on the decision-making process downtown. Former Mayor Joseph Darst had, after all, formed Civic Progress, Inc. to push through expressways and other civic improvement projects, and the corporate leaders that made up the exclusive group's membership possessed more money and influence than the protesters. Just as importantly, city planners had been working for decades on the expressway routes, and gave no indication that their plans could be improved. Like the planners, state highway engineers had the power of the widespread postwar faith in experts behind them, and their role in expressway design reinforced that faith. Understanding this, the downtown business community worked to build close ties with the engineers. St. Louis's traditional ward-based political process was at risk of being pushed aside by this growing consensus, but it was engrained in the culture so deeply that it would still wield influence in the debate. The North Side protesters who continued to work through those traditional channels at least would have a chance of persuading decision-makers change their positions on the expressway.

Without a visionary mayor possessing deft political skills, however, no expressway—Elliott Route, River Route, or otherwise—would be built. One man, Mayor Raymond Tucker, worked to build the expressway using rhetoric, political persuasion,

and compromise. His ability to bring together different—and at times, hostile—groups with competing interests would help do much to secure expressways for the city. All of the players would influence the final routing of the Mark Twain Expressway, but Mayor Raymond Tucker managed to bring them all together to see it realized.

A New Proposal and a Continued Fight

While the other pro-expressway groups wanted the expressways constructed exactly as designed and as quickly as possible, Mayor Tucker understood that some compromise would be necessary to quiet the protests coming from North St. Louis. In the interest of political expediency, he would not concede entirely, but instead try to meet the protesters halfway. Accordingly, he continued his behind the scenes maneuvering. Letters suggest that the mayor began making overtures for a route change just months after taking office. One letter dated June 12, 1953, suggests that Mayor Tucker had been in contact with his old colleagues from Washington University engineering department. Whether or not he contacted them first is unknown, but the professors looked over the proposed route and one wrote, "I am glad that you agree with us that considerable more study should be given to this project in view of the property damage along the proposed route and in view of the possibility of an alternate route."[1]

Tucker went further by requesting the State Highway Commission to conduct more studies so that changes in the route could be made. His personal qualifications and professional connections to the engineering field no doubt gave his request added weight, and the commission responded quickly by stating that "the Department will make further study of all possible routes for connecting the two points, including the proposed Elliott

[1] J.W. Hubler to Tucker, June 12, 1953, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

route and the suggested alternates." This time the commission included a third, previously-unconsidered route for study; it remained virtually unchanged for the Walnut Park portion, but bordered the eastern edge of O'Fallon Park (instead of along Fairgrounds Park) and extended along Broadway. As if to suggest that reduced raw numbers alone could determine the best route, the Highway Commission was "preparing an estimate of the number of residences which will be affected . . . if the Elliott location or one of the suggested alternative locations is followed." [2] Echoing this simplistic definition, the Board of Public Service, a mayor-appointed City Plan Commission-affiliated board responsible created by the 1876 charter that was charged with the management of construction projects, "recommended . . . that the Highway Commission be requested to make a further study of a new route, paying especial attention to the possibility of a minimum dislocation of tenants."[3]

After a year of vigorous debate characterized by traditional St. Louis antagonistic rhetoric, the tide appeared to turn in favor of North Side neighborhoods. In late October 1953, State Highway Commission officials held a conference with three protest leaders—William Eichenser, Fred Niemoeller, and Msgr. Henry Schuermann of St. Englebert's Catholic Church—to discuss possible changes that resulted from the routing studies. "After the [new] O'Fallon Park line was explained to these gentlemen," wrote state urban engineer Myer Ableman to Mayor Tucker, "they indicated approval approaching enthusiasm for the new plan." Although the protest leaders had some concerns about a

[2] Robert L. Hyder to Tucker, June 24, 1953, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[3] Frank J. McDevitt to Tucker, June 25, 1953, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder. The letter would also contend that there was no opposition to the new route from residents located near 8th and Mullanphy, but a year later a petition with the signatures of hundreds of parishioners at St. Casimir's Catholic Church would arrive. They would oppose the Mark Twain as it would require the demolition of their church.

number of cross streets that would have to be closed by the limited-access expressway, their reactions suggested that the expressway fight might be nearing its end. To some who would no longer be directly affected by the expressway the fight was over, echoing the traditional local focus of St. Louis politics.[4]

One month later, in late November 1953, city leaders announced an official "major change" in the Mark Twain Expressway route. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that the new route was "close to a route suggested in 1948 by the City Plan Commission," but it was far from a river route.[5] Instead, the new route represented a compromise between the Elliott route and a river route. The expressway would be moved approximately one mile to the west of the Elliott route, much closer to Broadway. Also, it would run through the extreme northern portion of O'Fallon Park instead of adjacent to Fairground Park. Densely populated areas that would have been sliced in half by the Elliott route would be avoided in favor of different areas.[6] After the highway commission proposed the new line, the City Plan Commission followed with its approval.[7]

The *Community News* cheerily reported that the new route would destroy only 365 dwelling units, instead of 800, and it would displace only 400 families as opposed to the 1,800 required for the Elliott route. The change of the three-and-a-half-mile section would also save $3 million, in part because it would reduce right-of-way acquisition

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[4] Ableman to Tucker, October 29, 1953, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[5] "Board Approves Major Change In Mark Twain Roadway Route," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 19, 1953.

[6] "Major Change in State Plan for New Expressway," *North St. Louis Community News*, November 25, 1953.

[7] "Board Approves Major Change In Mark Twain Roadway Route," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 19, 1953.

costs. “The proposed change in the Mark Twain Expressway route,” claimed the article, “marks the culmination of a vigorous campaign waged earlier this year by North Side civic groups and The Community News in opposition to the original route.” It was the first time that the editors of the North Side newspaper claimed a role in the Elliott route opposition, and they portrayed the route change as a victory.[8]

If it was unclear before that neighborhood opposition had an effect, then the new compromise changed that. The *Post-Dispatch* reported that Mayor Tucker ordered a restudy of the plan “after residents along the original route protested vigorously against displacement of homes,” and referenced protest meetings in northwest St. Louis. A representative from the City Plan Commission confirmed that the new route was intended “to overcome some of the organized opposition of property owners.”[9]

Another key change was made. Rather than dividing the neighborhood by race and relative physical condition as the original Elliott proposal (see figure 1) had done to some degree, the new expressway, if constructed, would divide North Side neighborhoods from the numerous industries to the east. This served the purpose of dividing different zoned districts, in this case residential and commercial from industrial, as advocated by Bartholomew in the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947 and currently supported by the City Plan Commission.[10]

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[8] “Major Change in State Plan for New Expressway,” *North St. Louis Community News*, November 25, 1953.

[9] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 19, 1953.

[10] City Plan Commission to Tucker, January 22, 1954, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

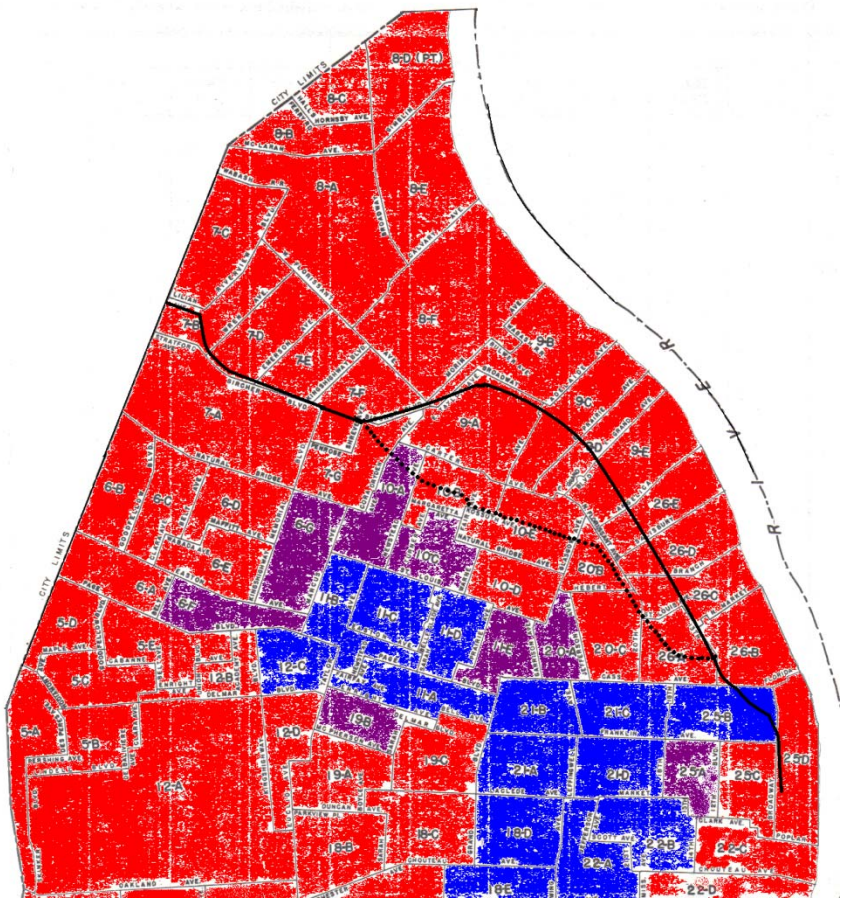

Figure 1: North St. Louis Census Tracts and New Compromise Route. Red: Completely or Nearly 100% White; Blue: Predominantly Black; Purple: Transition. The dotted line represents the central portion of the old Elliott route. The solid line represents the compromise route. Map by U.S. Census Bureau modified by author.

Although it was a milestone for North Side improvement associations and a testament to Tucker's political abilities, the route change did not end the expressway fight. The breadth of the opposition declined with the announcement of the compromise, but the groups that remained involved would fight with greater intensity. While the new route running through O'Fallon Park reduced the destruction for right-of-way in total numbers of structures, most North St. Louis protesters still did not see it as the least

destructive route that could be constructed. The new route saved many homes that would have otherwise been cleared had the Elliott line been constructed, but it created an almost wholly new set of properties to be demolished in the O'Fallon, Hyde Park, and Murphy-Blair neighborhoods. In northwest St. Louis the route remained essentially the same, separating the residential areas of Walnut Park from the industrial zones to the south. Much more work would have to be done by Tucker and Civic Progress, Inc. to make the Mark Twain Expressway a reality.

Downtown policymakers such as Tucker and the City Plan Commission would also make less antagonistic efforts to stabilize property values than expressway planning and slum clearance. The political realities required they do so, despite the power of the growing consensus. So, rather than clearing troublesome neighborhoods through expressway construction or urban renewal measures, which would involve "displacement of large low-rent populations which may have nowhere to go" and dealing with "special interests that oppose," the mayor and planners advocated encouraging local citizens to physically fix up their neighborhoods.[11] This would effectively fight the "creeping sickness" of blight that was said to cover 17 percent of the city.[12] As a result, a positive physical environment would result in social and economic stability, and not slums. In December 1953, one month after the expressway compromise was announced. Mayor Raymond Tucker disclosed two "pilot areas" for the city's first official rehabilitation and restoration program for city neighborhoods. Just months earlier, the city of Baltimore had

[11] David Brown, "How St. Louis Is Fighting Blight," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 1, 1956.

[12] Ibid.

implemented a similar and particularly successful rehabilitation program for its aging neighborhoods.[13]

The first two neighborhoods chosen for rehabilitation, Cherokee in South St. Louis and Hyde Park on the North Side, would serve as examples for other neighborhoods on how to fight blight through citizen participation, rather than measures that seemed to emanate solely from downtown and for the benefit of downtown interests. Both pilot areas would be located near proposed expressways. Despite the recent compromise concerning the proposed Mark Twain Expressway, residents of Hyde Park would continue their vocal opposition, a fact that may have played a role in the neighborhood's selection for the program.

The program stipulated that residents' homes would be inspected by city inspectors for violations of the Minimum Housing Standards, as proposed in the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947 and adopted legally by the Board of Aldermen that year. The minimum standards ordinance had set guidelines for housing acceptability that, if not complied with after citation, would result in fines for individual property owners. Under direction from the city government, residents would be encouraged to spend their own money to rehabilitate their homes—painting, replacing broken windows, repairing foundations—in the name of saving their neighborhoods from transitioning from blight to slums.

In return for local compliance, the city agreed to fight blight by supplying necessary services local improvement and business associations typically worked to acquire, such as parks, playgrounds, traffic flow regulation, street re-surfacing, and

[13] "The Baltimore Plan Pilot Program," paper, September 9, 1953, found in Tucker Papers, Box 22, Minimum Housing Standards; *North St. Louis Community News*, December 21, 1953.

regular trash collection.[14] City officials would also encourage residents to go beyond the standards and make voluntary improvements.[15] Most importantly, citizens would receive the personal satisfaction that they themselves had physically—and thus socially—stabilized their own communities.

An undated report on the implementation of the Housing Rehabilitation Project—probably produced for the mayor in late 1953 by the City Plan Commission—outlined how the program would work, its likely benefits, and how neighborhoods were chosen. Pilot projects would be required to have a number of "desirable factors" in order to be selected. The list included, among other things, a generally good environment, low land crowding, and the economic feasibility of rehabilitation. The area should not be "too good of an area but one showing visible results" that could be publicized. Tucker and the commission certainly understood that publicizing positive results could lead to public support for not only more rehabilitation programs, but also large-scale civic projects. It should also have a "sympathetic active citizen group," likely because that group could help lead the program to success.[16]

Hyde Park would be a perfect fit for a number of reasons, the report claimed: "the housing, though old, is substantial, and there is a high percentage (about 70%) of owner occupied structures."[17] It went on to point out that "there appear to be some active citizen

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[14] "Hyde Park, Cherokee Rescued From Blight," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 6, 1957.

[15] Brown, "How St. Louis Is Fighting Blight," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 1, 1956.

[16] "Neighborhood Planning Sub-Committee Report on Rehabilitation Area Selection," undated, 3. Tucker Papers, Box 22, Minimum Housing Standards.

[17] Findings of the report, when compared with census data, point out the difficulties of setting neighborhood boundaries. For the purposes of providing statistics for comparison particular areas, I defined the Hyde Park area as census tracts 9-E, 26-D, and 26-E. This follows some historical definitions of the neighborhood; however, some sources place tract 9-E in the College Hill neighborhood. Furthermore,

groups on this area among businessmen and home owners,"[18] as evidenced by the Hyde Park Improvement Association. As mandated by the program, citizens would form the Hyde Park Community Council as well to help implement the rehabilitation measures. That council would work closely with the newly formed Rehabilitation Coordinating Committee based in city hall.[19]

The 34-block area of Hyde Park had "no racial mixture as the area is practically all white," and "no race problem," which would ensure a physically and socially homogeneous neighborhood advocated by the *Comprehensive City Plan* and the FHA.[20] Also, the "geographic location of this section would act as an anchor in pinning and holding down the spread of blight and slums" from adjacent areas to the south.[21] Though Hyde Park had been deemed blighted by the City Plan Commission in the 1947 city plan, the area did not border predominantly African American areas as did Murphy-Blair, nor had it witnessed a large racially motivated violent episode such as the one in the Fairgrounds area in 1949.

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census data reveals a much lower number of owner occupied structures for the three tracts—about 25 percent—with no one tract skewing the results. 1950 Census, 52, 56.

[18] "Neighborhood Planning Sub-Committee Report on Rehabilitation Area Selection," undated, "Hyde Park Area" section. Tucker Papers. Box 22, Minimum Housing Standards.

[19] Monroe F. Brewer to Ralph Suedmeyer, September 8, 1954, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder. Brewer was chief engineer of the Rehabilitation Coordinating Committee and Suedmeyer served as chairman of the Hyde Park Community Council.

[20] *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947, Plate 17; Evan McKenzie, *Privatopia*, 64. McKenzie argues that the FHA officially adopted this policy, which euphemistically advocated race restricted covenants, as late as 1947. Though the U.S. Supreme Court denied the legality of such covenants in 1948, the previous endorsement by the FHA simply led to increasingly euphemistic terms to describe neighborhood racial homogeneity by the planning agencies and real estate agents.

[21] "Neighborhood Planning Sub-Committee Report on Rehabilitation Area Selection."

In addition to the age of its structures, the involvement of the community, and its racial composition, Hyde Park's location within the path of the compromise expressway route and the traditional structure of the city's politics no doubt played crucial roles in the neighborhood's selection. In St. Louis's ward-based localized politics, aldermen could exercise "aldermanic courtesy," the unofficial but long-understood agreement that a project in a particular ward would not be approved without the expressed consent of the alderman of that ward. Theoretically, if a vote at the board resulted in a 27-1 decision, with every alderman in favor of a measure except the one whose ward would be directly affected, the measure would be defeated. In fact, the measure likely would not even come to a vote, making debate and behind the scenes maneuvering necessary for the stalemate to be broken.[22] Tucker understood that if the residents and ward leaders of Hyde Park were not given something in exchange for the loss of many homes and businesses, as well as access to their jobs and schools to the east, the ward's alderman could dash all hopes for completing the compromise route.

Within months the program showed results.[23] By January 1956, two years after implementation, 2,185 of 3,701 total violations of the Minimum Housing Standards ordinance registered by inspectors in Hyde Park would be corrected by residents.[24] By August 1959, homeowners in Hyde Park would spend an estimated $524,000 on improvements (see figures 2 and 3 for examples). One million dollars would be spent in the Cherokee area on the South Side. The program would be so successful, in fact, that

[22] Stein, 113.

[23] "Housing Renewal Making Progress In Pilot Areas," *North St. Louis Community News*, May 12, 1954.

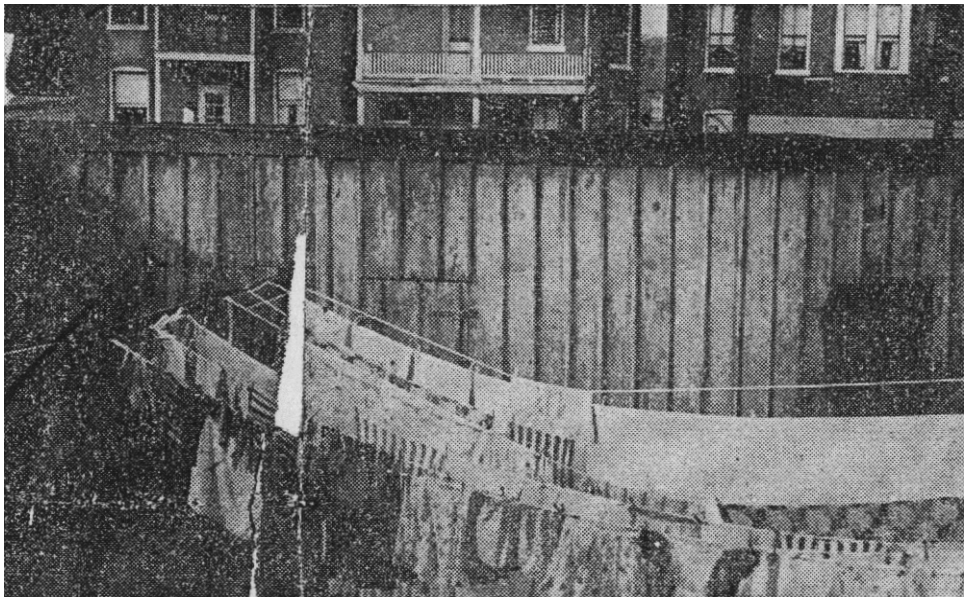
[24] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, January 1, 1956.

city officials would expand it into many other parts of the city such as the southern portion of the Hyde Park area and the Fairgrounds area.[25] Residents would spend a total of $892,000 in three other neighborhoods added to the program. As outlined in the original plans, the successful rehabilitation of the pilot areas would lead to positive publicity, and would lead the *Globe-Democrat*—in one of many articles on the subject produced by the downtown dailies—to call the program a "Good Example of City-Citizen Co-Operation."[26]

The sense of enthusiasm with which Hyde Park residents would undertake the program recommendations attest to residents' connection to the unique built environment as well as their intentions to remain in their homes, in their neighborhood. As one resident would note, "North St. Louis is a nice place to live. Why go out in the County to find a home? We've got something right here." But she would highlight the complicated state of North St. Louis just after World War II in her further comments. She and her husband had found the century-old home during the postwar housing crisis and remembered that "it was in a terrible condition . . . You had to want a home pretty badly to buy it. And we wanted a home badly. This [was] the only one we could find that was livable—and this wasn't livable." Rehabilitation of their home would require considerable commitment to the area in work, time, and money. Since their purchase they had spent countless hours and dollars adding a new furnace, building a patio, replacing

[25] "4 More Areas Selected for Renewal Work," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 30, 1962.

[26] "Hyde Park, Cherokee Rescued From Blight," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 6, 1957.



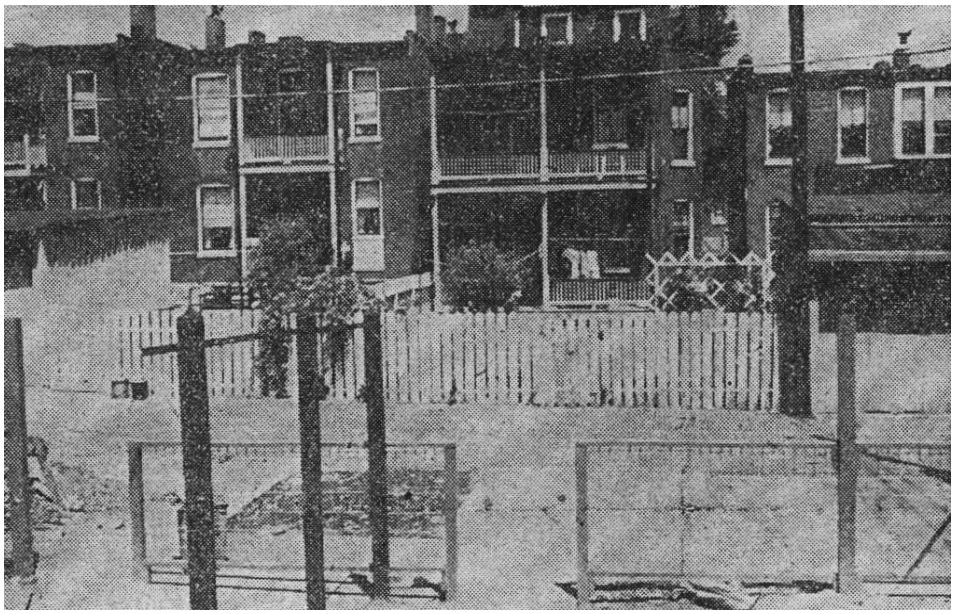


Figure 2 and 3: Before and After Photographs Showing Rehabilitation Results in Hyde Park. Source: "Hyde Park, Cherokee Rescued From Blight," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 6, 1956.

windows and the roof, and papering and painting walls, among other things.[27] Staying in North St. Louis took a lot of work, but residents were willing to put in the time and money to stay where they considered to be home. A December 1954 report in the *Community News* would confirm that connection. According to the report, 82.1% of property owners and 95.1% of tenants had no intention of moving, and a total of 97% preferred to buy in the area.[28]

Another event a year and a half earlier had put that sense of community on display. In July 1953, officials announced that the White Water Tower, at the center of a roundabout at 20th Street and Grand Boulevard, and one of two architecturally distinguished towers in the Hyde Park area, would be renovated by the city at a cost of $10,000. The tower, though not used for its original purpose in 40 years, had been a rallying point for neighborhood residents for years. In 1933, after saving the landmark from destruction, then Mayor Bernard Dickmann said, "wrecking it would verge closely on an act of sacrilege." After being turned off during World War II for energy conservation, the lights had been returned to the tower in 1949. Ten thousand local residents had shown up for a celebratory parade that, according to the *Community News*, turned into a "street dance."[29]

Even in the 1950s as some people were moving to and shopping in the suburbs, the area surrounding the tower thrived with numerous shops and a merchants' association named after the familiar landmark. The city water commissioner in charge of the tower

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[27] Brown, "How St. Louis Is Fighting Blight," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, "April 1, 1956.

[28] "St. Louis to Celebrate Hyde Park Centennial on Dec. 3," *North St. Louis Community News*, November 17, 1954.

[29] "Water Tower, Not Used in 40 Years, To Get Face Lifted," *North St. Louis Community News*, July 29, 1953.

stated that he would not mind tearing it down, but the *Community News* noted that he "added frankly that he would rather spend the money [on renovation] than risk a storm of protests."[30] Familiar landmarks served as sources of pride for residents of Hyde Park, and highlighted why residents were willing to stop an expressway.

The city's choice of Hyde Park for the pilot program—and the response of the residents there—also underscored a sense of anxiety about the neighborhood's future. Even if that meant complying with housing standards created by planners and other downtown interests that ignored the uniqueness of individual neighborhoods, many people were willing to fix up their homes and stay put. Still, many residents had been leaving the area. By the early 1950s, the neighborhood's population had declined since 1940 in all but one census tract, which showed a modest gain. In December 1954, one year after the start of the rehabilitation program, Mayor Tucker's speech at the Hyde Park Centennial celebration would summarize the current situation in a surprisingly well-rounded manner, highlighting his ability to speak to different groups on complex issues. "Hyde Park probably is not the center of activity it once was," he said; "[however] this area is far from a slum neighborhood which is the very backbone of our community." Still, Tucker's statements were grounded in his larger beliefs and goals. The program was just one piece necessary to save St. Louis. Without cooperation between the city and the people, the rehabilitation plan would fail and Hyde Park would "become a slum area within 10 years."[31]

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[30] "Water Tower, Not Used in 40 Years, To Get Face Lifted," *North St. Louis Community News*, July 29, 1953.

[31] "Mayor Commends Hyde Park Area Fight on Blight," *North St. Louis Community News*, December 8, 1954.

Though not deemed a slum by Tucker and other decision-makers, the seeming interchangeability of "slums" and "blight" by politicians and in the newspapers—and the inclusion of Hyde Park in that discussion—made the neighborhood's future seem all the more uncertain. An unsigned letter to the *Community News* emphasized the importance of taking pride in one's neighborhood and keeping property in great condition. "If we do not, [the neighborhood] will become a prey (this has surely been proven), to the ever increasing menace of St. Louis' westward creeping slums."[32]

The rehabilitation program for Hyde Park also served as a political tool for Mayor Tucker. By making overtures to unite the residents of Hyde Park to save their own neighborhood, Tucker could, as was commonly believed by decision-makers in the postwar era, stop the spread of blight. He could neutralize any continued expressway opposition, ensure a vote of approval at the Board of Alderman, and help guarantee his reelection three years later. But most importantly, the rehabilitation program could secure thousands of votes in support of bond measures to pay for other large-scale—and extremely expensive—projects proposed by Tucker and Civic Progress, Inc. With numerous other projects planned to save the city from decline, the rehabilitation program—especially for carefully selected neighborhoods—was just one piece of a larger puzzle.

Tucker, Expressway Engineers, and the Fight to Early 1955

Because the urban expressways would be part of the national highway system and owned by the state, and because federal funding was needed to implement expressway projects in the first place, it was important for downtown leaders to ally themselves with

[32] Letter, "The Mail Bag," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 16, 1955.

state highway engineers. Downtown business and political leaders understood that they must persuade the engineers to see their own wishes for expressways become realities, and they worked accordingly to build lines of communication with those state employees. In St. Louis, the interconnection between engineers and the mayor and the major business leaders who made up Civic Progress, Inc. was apparent in interagency communications. Mayor Tucker, for instance, when questioned by a concerned citizen about a proposed expressway route, would frequently defer the question to the State Highway Commission, claiming it was not his decision to make.[33]

The technique likely was a shrewd case of passing the buck to pacify protesters, but it worked because Tucker's claim was believable. In cities across the nation, including Baltimore, Boston, Houston, San Francisco, Seattle, and Los Angeles, state engineers held the most power in local transportation decisions, and in most cases more than the municipal governments.[34] In some specific cases, such as the unusual advancement of highway funds, state engineers in St. Louis listened to the needs of local business leaders and decided accordingly. On December 10, 1953, after members of Civic Progress had requested the advancement, Rex Whitton, the chief state engineer at the time, "made it clear that the ultimate decision would have to be that of the Highway Commission." While that statement appeared to suggest that state engineers made the final decision, it was more likely that downtown business leaders, such as local department store magnate Sidney Baer, knew they had to wield their influence through

[33] Tucker's apparent deference to engineers was echoed years later in other cities as well, with different circumstances. In 1967, amid a debate over highway placement in North Nashville, Mayor Beverly Briley stated "When I talked to the state highway boys, I wasn't so sure the road should go where they said. But I got the idea that they weren't going to voluntarily change this—they were too committed. And I have no authority to tell them what to do," Ben Kelley, *The Pavers and the Paved*, 101-102.

[34] Lupo, Colcord, and Fowler, *Rites of Way*, 207.

legitimate channels, such as persuading officials like Whitton. Then engineers, who provided a sense of highly-valued technical authority to the plans of downtown leaders, could more effectively persuade the public. As chairman of Civic Progress's Streets and Highways Committee, Baer would be present at important meetings with the mayor and state engineers while neighborhood opposition leaders and, often, aldermen would be left out.[35]

Ten days after meeting with the mayor and Civic Progress, Whitton wrote to Tucker and stated "as a result of our conference on Friday . . . in St. Louis . . . I recommended to this Commission that it advance the money for the acquisition of right-of-way on the Mark Twain Expressway." With the news, Baer expressed delight in a letter to Tucker and suggested future meetings to discuss how to develop an ordinance of approval that was needed to use the money. Tucker had managed to bring the powerful business community together with state engineers to secure the advancement of money for the expressway, an advancement that likely could not have occurred without political persuasion. The future meetings discussed by Baer were now needed to discuss how Tucker would close the gap between the alliance of downtown leaders and engineers and the locally focused aldermen. Working to reconcile the different interests of numerous groups, Tucker was the bridge needed to see the Mark Twain Expressway become a reality.[36]

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[35] "Third Street Highway Conference at Columbian Club, Friday, Dec. 10," Memo, December 10, 1953, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[36] Whitton to Tucker on December 20, 1953,another letter, Sidney R. Baer of Civic Progress to Tucker, December 23, 1953, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

Despite positive overtures toward North Side residents such as a compromise route and a neighborhood rehabilitation program, Tucker and his downtown allies were still unable to eliminate all opposition to the Mark Twain Expressway. New protests came mostly from areas newly affected by the compromise route, especially areas in the northwest such as Walnut Park, and the rhetoric remained the same. In December 1953, the Walnut Park Improvement Association sent petitions of protest with the signatures of "2500 residents and business people in the area affected" to Mayor Tucker, who then sent them to the City Plan Commission. The chairman of the association, Roland R. Goerke, noted that the River Route was still the best plan, considering that the new compromise route would still destroy homes, cause the city to lose taxes, and encourage the already occurring "exodus" to the county. The residents of Walnut Park, he wrote, were "quite resentful of the proposed route of the expressway because the only benefit derived therefrom goes to county and other out of town persons, and possibly to the downtown merchants."[37]

Several factors suggest why residents of Walnut Park fought the proposed expressway so hard, even when Tucker had worked so hard for compromise. The neighborhood had lost homes before due to industrial expansion. Between 1939 and 1941, the St. Louis Ordinance Plant had been constructed in the southern portion of the neighborhood. The plant, which produced small arms munitions for the U.S. military during World War II, provided a source of employment for neighborhood residents. Construction of the plant had required moving of Bircher Boulevard and the destruction of 217 homes and 9 businesses. As one local historian notes, this destruction had caused

[37] *North St. Louis Community News*, February 10, 1954.

the "first exodus" to the county from the neighborhood. The neighborhood had recovered, however, with a net gain of 50 houses after the war. Most new residents at that time had come from other North Side neighborhoods, were Catholic, and possessed ethnic heritage.[38]

They likely had moved to Walnut Park for things they found desirable about the area, such as accessibility to single-family homeownership.[39] Compared to other communities within the study area, Walnut Park had a very high level of homeownership. Of the 8,312 dwelling units reported in the area in 1950, 5,822, or 70 percent, were owner occupied. Furthermore, most of the structures, 72 percent, had been built in the last thirty years, and only one percent were vacant.[40] Homes were a source of pride for working-class residents, and they had already seen the effects of destroying some of those homes. The neighborhood was indeed growing in its westernmost sections, but it was clear from past experiences that the new expressway could not guarantee a brighter future.

In response to the Walnut Park petitions that had been sent in December 1953, the City Plan Commission noted that the new route was the still the best, and it disrupted fewer lives than before. The commission also suggested that residents were wishing to possibly make a profit off of their homes. A sense of frustration over dealing with so many similar citizen complaints comes through:

> None of the arguments . . . from the Walnut Park group are unique or different from those that might be voiced by any group of citizens affected by a public improvement of this type. It is the Commission's opinion,

[38] Ulery, "Walnut Park," 47-48, 50, 56-57.

[39] Sandweiss, 139-140.

[40] 1950 Census, 51. While the aforementioned problems associated with neighborhood boundaries slightly obscure the exact population of the area, census tracts provide the best window into the population of Walnut Park.

> however, that the determination of convenience and necessity of the many should never be influenced or affected by the mere inconvenience of a few.[41]

This response would become common from around this point on. Comments suggesting that the good of the many outweighs the wishes of the few—and comments suggesting that everyone wants the expressway, just not in their own neighborhood—were frequent, as they had been in past St. Louis civic project debates. By showing the substantial degree to which planners, engineers, the mayor, and downtown businessmen possessed similar objectives, it also reflected the prevailing consensus in favor of economic growth and expertise. Jane Jacobs echoed this process when she wrote, "The planners, traffic commissioners, major elected officials, and other remote people at the top of the municipal apparatus expect this procedure. They know all about such protesters: well-meaning people but, in the nature of things, untrained in these problems, concerned with parochial interests, unable to see the 'big picture.'"[42]

Dealing with Walnut Park protesters would be particularly hard for Tucker and other downtown leaders for other reasons. The city could not logically offer a rehabilitation program for the neighborhood because it was already generally in good shape. If political deals were to be made, other avenues of persuasion would have to be considered. Furthermore, moving the route anywhere other than along the river would destroy more homes or remove land from industrial use. For Walnut Park residents against the current proposed route, the River Route was the only option, and for

[41] City Plan Commission to Tucker, January 22, 1954, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder, Emphasis in original.

[42] Jacobs, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*, 358.

downtown leaders, the current route was the only feasible one. Political deals might be the only way to break the stalemate.

At the other end of North St. Louis, residents of Murphy-Blair, located just south of the Hyde Park neighborhood, were relatively less vocal concerning the Mark Twain Expressway throughout the debate. As new residents flowed in to the neighborhood from other parts of the U.S. and upwardly mobile whites flowed out to neighborhoods such as Walnut Park and the suburbs,[43] the area was left with diminished political power. There were churches, businesses, and familial links to the neighborhood, but there were no homeowners associations such as the ones in Walnut Park that spoke for them on easily defendable terms. In the postwar era, the defense of one's home received more attention than the defense of an urban neighborhood of tenants that had been officially blighted by experts. Therefore, very few letters of protest came from groups or citizens in the Murphy-Blair.

Some Murphy-Blair residents did unite to fight the expressway, and they did so by defending the ubiquitous symbol of urban neighborhood resistance to change, the Catholic parish. If constructed as proposed, the right-of-way for the Mark Twain Expressway would require the demolition of St. Casimir's Catholic Church. Protest petitions from the parish, which was founded in 1889 to serve the substantial number of Polish immigrants and their descendents on the North Side, were sent to Mayor Tucker and the City Plan Commission beginning in February 1954, three months after the compromise route was announced. Despite the fact that the church, located at Eighth and Mullanphy streets, had also fallen under the previous Elliott route and the River Route,

[43] Ulery, "Walnut Park," 50.

no protesters defended the church at meetings or in the press before early 1954. The names on the document revealed the Polish heritage of the signers and the strong ties immigrants and their families had to the parish and the neighborhood.[44]

By echoing earlier statements by other expressway protesters, the rhetoric expressed by the parish's clergy reflected the constraints on discourse in the postwar era. "We do not wish to stand in the way of progress and improvements," stated the Reverend Vincent J. Mogelnicki, but the parishioners felt the highway could be rerouted "and still benefit the community as a whole." The petition's purpose, he wrote, was "to indicate that this protest is not the isolated work of a few dissenters but the wishes of our entire congregation and probably of the entire Polish Colony of St. Louis." The comment was no doubt meant to inform decision-makers that their protest was not the selfish wishes of a small isolated group of people. In their view—or the view required by consensus discourse—the parishioners were working to benefit St. Louis and the large community of Polish Americans within the city's borders. Mogelnicki went on to point out how the loss of the church would send ripples through the neighborhood and St. Louis society.

> Even tho (sic) our parish is not as large as it used be—we at one time numbered 600 children in our school—we still have a school with 83 pupils and our parish is still active with approximately 700 members. We still have active the following sodalities which meet at least once monthly: The Mothers' Club; The Young Ladies' Sodality; The Holy Name Society; The Rosary Sodality; The Christian Mothers' Society; a Sewing Circle; The St. Casimir's Sports' Club and a unit of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Besides the parochial societies the following groups hold their meetings in our hall: The St. Casimir, and The St. Stanislaus Kostka Lodges of the Polish Roman Catholic Union, both Fraternal Insurance Lodges; the local district council of these lodges has its meetings in our hall; The Glos Polek Society (Polish Voice); and the Polish American

[44] Petitions, February 15, 1954 and June 10, 1954, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

Relief Society, Circle #19, operating under a charter issued by the government. [45]

But that traditional community was fragmented now. The addresses on the petitions and the late date that they were sent suggest that parishioners simply did not live as close to the church—which as part of a Catholic parish was essentially immovable—as they once had. Many parishioners had moved away to other neighborhoods, such as Walnut Park or parts of the South Side. To a certain degree, they also moved away from their ethnic identity and toward becoming white middle class Americans. Indicative of this, Mary Paszkiewicz, wife of Harry Paszkiewicz, who himself would write Mayor Tucker an angry letter protesting the Ozark Expressway a year later (see Appendix), signed the St. Casimir's petition and listed her South Side address. Because the route had already been moved once, and possibly because the loss of the church did not mean the loss of large numbers of parishioners' homes, the petitions from St. Casimir's received weak recognition from downtown decision-makers. The mayor's secretary wrote to Rev. Mogelnicki and stated that the "Mayor appreciates receiving your recommendations and you may be sure they will be given every consideration."[46]

North St. Louis protests continued and meetings were still held, often at the still doomed-as-proposed St. Englebert's. Russell Schmitt, of the Northwest group, still advocated the River Route and said the November 1953 revision of the route would still "cut North St. Louis in two like the Chinese wall."[47] One meeting on August 24, 1954 drew 300 residents, a number down considerably from the peak reported at 600 a year

[45] Vincent J. Mogelnicki to Tucker, February 15, 1954, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[46] Robert E. Smith to Mogelnicki, February 17, 1954, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[47] "Mark Twain Expressway Mass Meeting Scheduled For Next Tuesday Night," *North St. Louis Community News*, August 18, 1954.

and a half earlier, though all neighborhood improvement and business associations previously represented were in attendance, including the Hyde Park Improvement Association.[48] Concurrently, the Hyde Park Community Council, the group formed to coordinate the rehabilitation program in Hyde Park and serve as a liaison between the community and downtown leaders, independently adopted a resolution against the new route, showing that the introduction of the rehabilitation program had failed to completely win over that neighborhood's residents. The Northwest Improvement Association adopted a resolution in protest as well.[49]

The protesters were not against the expressway, as they always reiterated, but felt that moving the route was an obvious choice. This time the Council for Community Preservation and member groups planned to hire engineers to study the feasibility of the River Route to help argue with the state engineers who, Russell Schmitt of the Northwest Improvement Association claimed, "have questioned our qualifications and capabilities of extending advice when planning the expressway."[50] With their own engineering consultant they intended to, as they saw it, level the playing field by fighting experts with other experts.

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[48] "North Side Groups to Contract Engineers for River Route Appraisal," *North St. Louis Community News*, September 1, 1954.

[49] "Second Resolution," August 21, 1954 and Robert O. Scheiperpeter to Tucker, August 16, 1954, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder. Names signed to the Hyde Park resolution were Ralph W. Suedemeyer, Bruno Sendlein, Mrs. Eugene McCabe, and Lawrence M. Farrell. The letter describing the Northwest also contained the names Roger R. Hammer, James J. Angelo, Frank F. Gastorf, and John Howdon; see also, letter from Brewer to Suedmeyer, September 8, 1954, in which Brewer, engineer for the city's Rehabilitation Coordinating Committee emphasizes that the shared goals of his group and the Hyde Park Community Council, led by Suedmeyer, did not include the routing of the expressway. "Our committee has no jurisdiction over highways in the city," he wrote. "We feel that perhaps some members of your executive committee, and committee chairmen, have not grasped the full intent of the program, and the procedures necessary for a close working relationship between our Committee and your Council."

[50] "Mark Twain Expressway Mass Meeting Scheduled For Next Tuesday Night," *North St. Louis Community News*, August 18, 1954.

This was a shrewd tactic, not only because of the prominent position experts such as engineers occupied amid the growing postwar consensus but also because of the general perspective of highway engineers in the early 1950s. As historian Mark Rose summarizes, expressway engineers held what amounted to a "narrower frame of reference" than that of their fellow city planning experts.[51] Although on the surface it appeared they shared goals similar to those of planners, they had no aspirations to remake, reshape, or redirect the city in the way planners did. Instead they worked to determine the fastest and cheapest routes with technical surveys and statistics as their guides. Civil engineers in the postwar era, unlike planners, were discouraged from thinking and seeing independently in their education and they were trained to solve puzzles without, as historian Tom Lewis notes, considering the puzzle "in its totality or its impact on society."[52]

While planners often wanted to remake the city as whole, engineers focused on singular tasks at hand. For expressway engineers, expressways themselves and their effects—traffic or otherwise—were their only concerns. This made them allies with the local downtown business community, who wanted to build an expressway system as quickly and cheaply as possible, and in some cities placed them at odds with planners and mayors who had more comprehensive goals of development in mind.[53] The sides in that division had many overlapping groups that varied from city to city, but in St. Louis, as

[51] Rose, *Interstate*, 65.

[52] Lewis, *Divided Highways*, 134-136.

[53] Rose, *Interstate*, 66.

their similar responses to citizen protests highlight, planners and engineers typically agreed on designs of expressways in general.[54]

In St. Louis, even where there was division, it was not substantial nor did it change policy. The recently retired Harland Bartholomew, in an April 1953 speech before the St. Louis Retail Controllers Group, stated the Elliott expressway designed by engineers was a poor choice because it was not routed through an open tract of land nor where it would serve the most people.[55] The Elliott route, he said, would not provide right-of-way wide enough for rapid transit in the expressway's "center malls." Doing so, according to Bartholomew, "seems like a very much better investment." But these were relatively small qualms, and despite the *Community News*'s somewhat dubious claim that Bartholomew "assailed" the engineers' route, North Side protesters would have had much to complain about if his recommended change to the Elliott route did indeed cut through the densest parts of their communities or if the already wide proposed roads were made wider to accommodate rapid transit.[56]

Further indicative of the wider consensus in St. Louis, engineers emphasized business and industry over individual homes and communities. A request for a route-change study—to move the southern half of the route to the east of Broadway—in July 1954 received technical but telling results back. Indeed, stated the State Highway Commission, moving a portion of the route near downtown further to the east, just west of Broadway, would disrupt only about 175 families while the original Elliott route

[54] Lupo, Colcord, and Fowler, *Rites of Way*, 233.

[55] *North St. Louis Community News,* April 29, 1953.

[56] "Comment" section, *North St. Louis Community News,* May 6, 1953.

would move 350 from the area. But while fewer families would be moved, approximately 90 businesses including "some large commercial and industrial establishments [such as] Bremen Bank, Krey Packing Company, Mound City Ice Plant, a printing company and other," would be disturbed. Business and policy leaders felt the loss of valuable industry could not be afforded. With the Elliott route only ten businesses would have to relocate from the immediate area.

"On the basis of the above facts," wrote Ableman, "we do not believe that keeping more families in this area, while losing some 80 businesses, justifies the moving of the line from its proposed location between 9th & 11th to the west side of Broadway." Even moving it further to the east—just east of Broadway—would not be feasible. "While there would be less families to be moved, a number of large business establishments are in the way. Also Broadway would have to be crossed twice at very acute angles, which would materially add to the construction cost. Also the connection to the McKinley Bridge would be difficult to accomplish," Ableman wrote. In the engineer's analysis, economic development was stressed and citizen input was quickly quashed by facts and figures.[57]

The engineers certainly possessed power, and the downtown business community possessed influence, but Mayor Tucker's political skills kept them all under his control. In July 1954, the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis produced a just-prepared but unreleased report for Tucker. Among other suggestions, the report proposed that the city government reconsider the Elliott route and acquire right-of-way

[57] Ableman to Tucker, July 19, 1954, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

immediately.[58] In response, Mayor Tucker carefully wrote to "My dear Howard" Baer, of A.S. Aloe Company, and said "I believe that would be inadvisable to make public the findings contained in this report. . . . I do not see where it will accomplish any purpose other than to renew the controversy over the location of these expressways." Adding a sense of understood legitimacy to his reasoning, Tucker stated to the group of influential businessmen the same thing he said to neighborhood protesters. Releasing the report was useless because a "firm decision has been made by the State Highway Commission. . . . Furthermore, I know of my own personal knowledge that the decision was made by the Highway Commission only after a comprehensive study."[59] Tucker obviously understood how to work effectively with different groups and interests.

Tucker's swift expansion of Civic Progress following his election the year before, and previous overtures made by the local business community, planners, and state engineers, suggested larger goals than simply an expressway system converging on downtown. Civic Progress was not only a tool used to persuade the citizens of St. Louis of the necessity for expressways, but a tool to drum up support for other major projects. Expressways—and other civic improvements—were extremely expensive. Public funding was needed to supplement federal money, and public support was needed to receive public money. As had been done successfully in 1923 and attempted numerous other times, the solution, developed by a Citizens Bond Issue Screening Committee, chaired by Civic Progress member and president of the Mercantile Trust Sidney Maestre, was a huge bond issue for civic improvements.

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[58] Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis, "Needed Links in the Highway System of Metropolitan St. Louis Area," July, 1954, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[59] Tucker to Baer, July 28, 1954, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

One of the first actions of Civic Progress, Inc. was to add more expert-supported legitimacy to their plans by commissioning a study by the Urban Land Institute. Founded in the late 1930s as the research commission for the National Association of Real Estate Brokers, the Urban Land Institute worked to help cities reduce the impact of decentralization and tackle the variety of other problems they mutually faced. Nationally, the ULI was a primary agent in the development of urban renewal legislation and downtown revitalization. Similar to Civic Progress and St. Louis decision-makers, according to Fogelson, "prominent merchants, bankers, insurance executives, or property owners who had a large stake in the well-being of the central business district" filled the ULI ranks.[60]

In a study produced specifically for St. Louis, Urban Land Institute consultants did little more than reiterate and expand on suggestions made by the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947 and the Elliott Plan. Even though downtown "will continue to contain the busiest retail and commercial activities in the city," the report claimed, a number of issues needed to be addressed. For example, part of St. Louis's decline could be avoided by constructing an extensive expressway system with appropriate amounts of parking. "St. Louis has lost something of its pre-eminence in various fields," commented Walter S. Schmidt, a consultant from Cincinnati. "Your city must be made a more convenient city in which to live and work." These suggestions were little different than what were heard before, but because they were stated by a national committee of respected urban experts, they added further legitimacy and urgency to expressway planning in St. Louis.

[60] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 237, 364, 390, 238.

The ULI study not only reflected about the role of technical expertise and about which civic problems were to be addressed in St. Louis, but also revealed the emergence of a growing alliance of interests from experts to real estate developers to increasingly powerful bureaucratic commissions. In addition to Civic Progress, the study was sponsored by the St. Louis Building Owners and Managers Association, the St. Louis Real Estate Board, and the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis. The City Plan Commission, the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority, and the St. Louis Housing Authority also cooperated. Further demonstrating the growing interconnectedness, St. Louis's own Harland Bartholomew served as a ULI consultant.[61] With the ULI study providing more legitimacy to revitalization plans, state engineers also served as vehicles to persuade the public of the need to construct expressways in a particular way. To the engineers, the facts concerning the expressway were clear. If not, they would explain them methodically so those who disagreed could understand. For example, in January 1955, after meeting with the members of the Northwest Improvement Association about the Mark Twain Expressway route, Myer Ableman, state engineer assigned to St. Louis, responded to one of its leaders, William Eichenser, with a detailed, five-page run-down of the inaccurate and impractical grounds for the group's opposition to the compromise expressway route. Figures 4 and 5 highlight a typical technocrat approach to the debate. The charts and Ableman's accompanying explanation show little regard for the complexities of the North Side communities and instead reduce them to simple statistics.

[61] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 238.

Figure 4:
Engineer's Estimate of Number of Houses That Would Be Demolished by Compromise Route in Northwest St. Louis by Type and Location.

Location	*Slum*	*Blighted*	*Old*	*New*	***Total***
In County	50	25	25	25	125
City Limits to Union			30	150	180
Kingshighway			10	15	25
Along Bircher				25	25
Total in City			40	190	230

Source: Ableman to Eichenser, January 17, 1955, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

Figure 5:
Engineer's Estimation of Number of Houses That Would Be Demolished by River Route in Northern St. Louis by Type and Location.

Location	*Slum*	*Blighted*	*Old*	*New*	***Total***
In County			50	100	150
City Limits to Riverview				100	100
Riverview to Baden	50	25	25		100
Baden to Broadway	50	25	25		100
Along Prescott	75				75
Total in City	125	25	25	150	325

Source: Ableman to Eichenser, January 17, 1955, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

Primarily, the state-approved line would relieve traffic on Bircher Boulevard. It would also provide an adequate escape route in case of an atomic attack, highlighting the era's technical responses to Cold War anxieties.[62] Hinting at future plans engineers had for St. Louis, Ableman wrote that moving the route east of Broadway—an effective river route—would also make "connections to the [future] north-south [distributor] expressway and to McKinley Bridge" difficult and would increase the highway's cost.[63]

Attempting to relate to protesters on their terms, housing loss was emphasized in Ableman's reasoning for refusing any more changes. According to his tables (reproduced here as figures 4 and 5), a route moved to the east of Broadway (similar to a river route) would take a total of 325 homes in the city versus 230 for the Elliott route (including 150 and 125 in the county, respectively). Curiously, he padded his numbers by including "slum" and "blighted" residences, with 125 slum and 25 blighted city residences in the Broadway total. For the state-approved Bircher Boulevard Line, Ableman noted no slum or blighted residences would be lost in the city, but 190 new residences would.

In other contexts, such as in the original Elliott Plan, engineers deemed the *removal* of slums and blight with the expressway as a *positive* result. When the Highway Commission's vision for the Mark Twain Expressway was questioned, though, "slum" and "blighted" residences were simply residences. This allowed the engineer to state that

[62] Dudley, Michael Quinn, "Sprawl as Strategy: City Planners Face the Bomb," *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 2001; 21, 62; Civic Progress, Inc. members attended conventions concerning atomic attacks on U.S. cities: program, "Operation Doorstep," Atomic Energy Commission, March 17, 1953 and "Observer Handbook: Operation Cue," Atomic Energy Commission, Spring 1955, both found in Tucker Papers, Civic Progress, Inc.

[63] Ableman to Eichenser, January 17, 1955, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

the *total* number of homes removed would be less if the current compromise route was approved.[64]

Albeman's technical expertise and state-appointed position gave his viewpoint weighted authority. "I feel certain that after your committee has explored all these facts," Ableman wrote to Eichenser, "you will come to the conclusion the State's approved line is the better of the two." Engineers, like planners, as technical experts above the fray, could denounce the emotional protests of affected residents as unremarkable and self-interested by presenting hard facts, but Albeman's reaction was rooted in what his education lacked. Typical engineering programs often did not require courses such as sociology, history, and public speaking. A broader base of education likely would have helped highway engineers better understand why residents felt so connected to their homes and neighborhoods while at the same time they supported expressways in general.[65]

Those residents were fighting—and at the same time accepting—wide acknowledgement that expressways were needed. In doing so they questioned the authority of technocrats and were quickly dismissed by those same technocrats who were given power by the consensus. Recognizing Eichenser's statements suggesting that, at least to some degree, he and his group accepted the consensus, Ableman concluded in his letter to Eichenser that he "was pleased with the attitude of your committee that you were not opposed to expressways."[66]

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Lewis, *Divided Highways*, 135.

[66] Ableman to Eichenser, January 17, 1955, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

Not everyone on the North Side opposed the current expressway route, nor was everyone on the North Side frustrated with downtown decision-makers, as one letter published in the *Community News* suggests. The writer, Arlen Jolly of Alpah Avenue in the North Pointe neighborhood, was upset about recent comments in the paper by Eichenser and he dared the *Community News* to publish his response as a "test of this paper's genuine interest in the community."[67]

Eichenser, in an editorial published in the *Community News*, had played his common angle by stating that the mayor was "trying to please downtown interests and people in the County. They want the expressway." By attacking the West End interests in city and county that had managed to influence a decision to change the Mark Twain to the approved truck route, he had pointed to perceptions based on a history of political and social fragmentation. "Who are the people who live along the Daniel Boone Expressway?" Eichenser had asked. "They are the influential people with downtown interests the Mayor apparently wants to please."[68]

"Mr. Eichenser accuses the mayor of catering to downtown interests," Jolly responded. "I should like to inform Mr. Eichenser that downtown interests ***are*** North St. Louis interests, as they are South St. Louis interests and East St. Louis interests."[69] With those words, Jolly subscribed to the dominant perception that the health of downtown was necessary for the health of the city and region. Many decision-makers and professionals in downtown, such as planners, felt they were working in the best interest

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[67] "Letter to the Editor, Re: Mark Twain Expressway,"*North St. Louis Community News*, February 2, 1955.

[68] William Eichenser, "Proposed Route of Mark Twain Expressway," *North St. Louis Community News*, January 26, 1955.

[69] "Letter to the Editor, Re: Mark Twain Expressway," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 2, 1955.

of the neighborhoods. Positive changes for downtown, the heart of the city, would benefit other parts of the city, the rest of the body, they believed. A similar perspective suggested that downtown was the hub and the rest of the city was the rim, with the transportation networks as spokes. The supposed apolitical nature of these metaphors made it difficult to oppose them.[70] "Without the life blood of the community surging through the downtown heart of St. Louis, the city and the suburbs would decay and blow away. That is unless something is done and done soon," Jolly wrote. [71]

Jolly, whose residence would not be lost to the Mark Twain Expressway, also attempted to debunk the popular option. He stated that a river route would push out existing industries along the river near downtown "which provides you and yours directly or indirectly with jobs and a source of livelihood." City Hall was paying attention; Mayor Tucker wrote the man and thanked him for his support, stating, "I am sure that if more St. Louisans were as interested in the future of their City as you our efforts to bring about greater progress would be expedited." [72]

The Bond Issue of 1955 and the End of the Mark Twain Expressway Fight

Mayor Tucker's work would culminate in a far-reaching goal. The Citizens for the Bond Issue Steering Committee, heavily influenced by Mayor Tucker and Civic Progress, Inc. produced a bond issue meant to save St. Louis from decay and modernize it for the future. In total, over $110 million for 23 separate propositions were asked of St. Louisans (see figure 6). For one measure, slum clearance, $10 million was requested to

[70] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 34-35.

[71] "Letter to the Editor, Re: Mark Twain Expressway," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 2, 1955.

[72] Ibid.; Response letter from Tucker, dated February 11, 1955. Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

Figure 6:
1955 Bond Proposals

Project	***Cost ($)***
Expressways	18,000,000
Street Improvements	11,615,000
Bridges and Viaducts	11,400,000
Parks and Playgrounds	11,000,000
Slum Clearance	10,000,000
Flood Control	7,547,000
Hospitals and Health	7,507,000
Street Lighting	6,000,000
Correctional and Juvenile Institutions	5,150,000
Neighborhood Rehabilitation	4,000,000
Municipal Dock	2,500,000
Rubbish and Garbage Disposal	2,400,000
Voting Machines	2,100,000
Fire Department	2,165,000
Resurfacing Streets and Alleys	2,000,000
Zoo	1,625,000
Public Buildings	1,505,000
Public Library	1,000,000
Art Museum	1,000,000
Planetarium	1,000,000
Street Cleaning	425,000
Auditing	400,000
Civil Defense	125,000
Total	110,639,000

Source: *St. Louis Globe-Democrat,* April 17, 1955.

meet the federally-mandated one-third of the cost. Rebuilding would be accomplished by private means at a cost of $350,000. Street widening, extension, and construction would cost over $11.6 million. On top of that, $18 million, more than any other project, would be needed for expressways.[73]

History had shown that voters in outlying districts suspected that such large-scale improvements benefited the central corridor, so Tucker and the bond committee surely understood that the list of improvements needed to be far-ranging and show obvious benefits to local communities. The rehabilitation program was a precursor to this approach. In fact, bond measures for urban renewal had failed to win approval as recently as 1948. Street improvements would generally be seen as beneficial, especially with automobile usage and ensuing traffic congestion on the rise, but a majority of the 23 propositions would certainly be seen as serving both the parts of the city and the city as whole. To facilitate the passage of the bond, Civic Progress, according to historian James Neal Primm, launched a year-long public relations "campaign blitz that saturated every level and corner of the community" from the front pages to editorials to cartoons of local newspapers.[74] Figure 7 shows Mayor Tucker discussing the bond with local business leader Sidney Maestre, and was published in the *Globe-Democrat* prior to the bond vote.

[73] "Includes Grand and Jefferson Widenings," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 17, 1955.

[74] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 488, 495. It could be argued that the seeds of this campaign were set with the "Progress or Decay? St. Louis Must Choose" series published by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 19, 1950.

Figure 7: Mayor Tucker Conferring With Sidney Maestre About the Bond, 1955. A model of the Mill Creek Valley redevelopment is in the foreground. Source: *St. Louis Globe-Democrat.*

Amid the barrage, the whole Mark Twain Expressway issue came to a head in April 1955 at the Board of Aldermen in downtown. With voters heading to polls to decide the fate of the bond issue in six weeks, the board approved the last portion of the compromise route through O'Fallon Park. The *Community News*, suggesting a sense of betrayal, ran the headline "2 North Side Aldermen Keep Promise: Vote Against Highway." The aldermen in question, Leo J. McLaughlin of the second ward and Everett J. Taylor of the twenty-seventh ward, voted against the compromise route, but "the other three aldermen who stated in pre-election speeches that they would vote against the

highway" instead voted in its favor. They included 21st ward alderman Barney Mueller, the candidate who defeated Charley McBride—the man who claimed to be "violently opposed" to the *Elliott Plan*—on a similar anti-expressway platform.[75]

The votes were somewhat telling. Mueller's ward, which would have been sliced in half if the Elliott route had been approved, would suffer no direct damage from the compromise route. Although he ran on a campaign in opposition to the Elliott route, Mueller also, like Mayor Tucker, was a Democrat, highlighting the importance of the April 1953 aldermanic elections. A "yes" vote came from first ward alderman Carl Gassel. His ward, which encompassed all of Baden, would be affected by the expressway only indirectly. Another "yes" vote also came from James Noonan, who represented Murphy-Blair. Since that neighborhood would be adversely affected by the new route, it is unclear why he voted as he did, though Tucker's influence likely played a role.[76]

The "no's" came from the Walnut Park ward, which would lose some homes, and the Hyde Park area, which also would lose homes and be disconnected from its traditional employment area along the river.[77] Passively, however, the two who voted "no" gave up their traditional privilege of "aldermanic courtesy," that gave aldermen full discretion over projects within their wards. Tucker, like mayors before him, found aldermanic courtesy "deplorable" and "personally [did] not believe [the tradition was] a benefit to the people of St. Louis."[78]

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[75] "2 North Side Aldermen Keep Promise: Vote Against Highway," *North St. Louis Community News*, April 6, 1955.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Tucker to Everett J. Taylor, April 4, 1955, and letters sent to the other North Side aldermen who voted "yes," found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder. The result may have been the result of a personal meeting

Presumably, Mayor Tucker had encouraged them to give up that privilege during a meeting with the North Side aldermen prior to the vote. Tucker wrote that he admired Taylor's "unselfish and beneficial actions in this as well as in other matters."[79] McLaughlin was similarly courageous in overcoming shortsighted, ward-focused motives and instead thinking of the civic whole. "Although you sincerely and ardently represented the feelings of the people in your own Ward," Tucker wrote, "you at the same time let the feelings of other St. Louisans be expressed through their own aldermen." McLaughlin thus performed "a great service not only to the people in your own Ward but to St. Louis as a whole."[80] Other aldermen voting "yes" were extended an identical good-of-the-whole thank-you, including Mueller.[81] James Noonan of the third ward, which included Hyde Park, may have been swayed by the rehabilitation program and his placement on the City Plan Commission as an ex-officio member, though no direct evidence suggests either.[82] Tucker also thanked two others concerning the matter. Highlighting the importance of political party allies, Tucker wrote to city treasurer John J. Dwyer that, "I know that if it were not for your unselfish and courageous leadership among the members of our Party, the endeavors to make the Mark Twain highway a reality may have been a

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with the mayor, as letters from Tucker to the North Side aldermen (Leo J. McLaughlin, James W. Noonan, John T. Curry, Edgar J. Feely, John T. Curry, Edgar J. Feely, Barney Mueller, Everett J. Taylor, and Carl Gassel) a year before reveal a meeting between the mayor and the men, Tucker to numerous aldermen, June 15, 1954, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[79] Tucker to Everett J. Taylor, April 4, 1955. found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder; Lana Stein, *St. Louis Politics*, 113.

[80] Tucker to Leo J. McLaughlin, April 4, 1955, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[81] Tucker to A. Barney Mueller, Tucker to James W. Noonan, Tucker to Edgar J. Feely, Tucker to Joseph P. Roddy, Tucker to Raymond Leisure, Tucker to George J. Grellner, all identical letters dated April 4, 1955.

[82] City Plan Commission to Tucker, January 22, 1954, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

total failure."[83] Aldermanic courtesy had been temporarily set aside, heralding an equally temporary and unstable political unity concerning the Mark Twain Expressway.

In an acknowledgement of the political maneuvers necessary to pass the bond, a number of the improvements considered were earmarked for specific projects throughout the city, including parts of North St. Louis. Tucker, Civic Progress, and downtown policymakers understood that residents of that part of the city would be more likely to support higher taxes for expressways through their neighborhood if they knew they were getting much in return. In addition to general quality-of-life measures, such as street lighting, street cleaning, and construction of new fire stations, North St. Louis residents would receive: a new baseball diamond and a new $300,000 swimming pool in Fairgrounds Park; a new $200,000 public library building in Walnut Park; dikes, levees, and a new pumping system, contingent on federal approval and funding, that would protect Baden; and $4 million to continue and expand the neighborhood rehabilitation program already showing positive results in Hyde Park. Understanding that all votes were equal, the bond committee made sure areas populated primarily by African Americans would also receive improvements, such as $365,000 for Homer G. Philips Hospital. The amounts, however, were substantially less than for areas populated by whites.[84]

The wide range of the bond issue served several purposes. Specific neighborhood improvements would help quell suspicion that the bond issue would benefit only a select of group of "downtown interests" by presenting obvious examples to the contrary. Funding for street lighting, for example, further showed that Civic Progress, Inc. was

[83] Tucker to John J. Dwyer, April 4, 1955, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[84] "Includes Grand and Jefferson Widenings," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 17, 1955.

working for the good of the whole city. Thus the locally-focused proposals, by drumming up support for the campaign, would facilitate the passage of measures for slum clearance and expressways, the two projects deemed most valuable to the business community. It must have worked.

Positions on the bond issue appeared split in North St. Louis, pointing to old divisions and maybe even the success of rhetoric used by downtown interests and policymakers finally sweeping away opposition with the help of a postwar nationwide consensus. The *Community News*, a leader in expressway opposition, showed support. First ward Democratic committee leader, Edward Roche, said the bond was "vital to interests of North and Northwest," St. Louis.[85]

Neighborhood suspicion of "downtown interests" continued. With the $110.6 million bond issue in 1955—"and taxes and more taxes"—for public improvements pushed by Civic Progress, the North Side improvement associations further tied the expressway and other measures to the selfish motives of "downtown interests." The massive public relations barrage of the influential Civic Progress was met with a smaller one sponsored by the improvement associations, dubbing it a "MISLEADING CAMPAIGN."[86]

The rhetoric North Side groups used pointed to the persistence of old rhetoric. "Small Business Man," one ad began. "Do you know that the Expressways, if built, will by-pass neighborhood business section in the City for the advantage and benefit of downtown business. Higher taxes and higher rents will not by-pass you," the ad angrily

[85]"First Ward Demo Body Endorses Local Bond Issue," *North St. Louis Community News*, May 25, 1955.

[86] Half-page advertisement, *North St. Louis Community News*, May 18, 1955.

proclaimed. “175 to 200 billboards, 2700 streetcar and bus advertisements, 500,000 car stickers, one minute movies in 70 theaters, 1,000 signs in theaters, 1,000,000 sample ballots, 50,000 cartoons, radio and t.v. announcements, not counting wages. Who is advancing the money for this immense propaganda and campaign expense? Are they spending this for your benefit? Ask yourself.”[87]

On May 25, 1955 voters in St. Louis approved all 23 bond proposals by huge margins, heralding a victory for Tucker, the downtown community, and other decision-makers. “Good of the whole” rhetoric defined by the downtown leaders won out over a different interpretation coming from North Side improvement associations. Through Civic Progress, Inc., downtown businessmen, professionals, and politicians acquired enough public financing to physically remake the city to their liking. “Progress,” “the good of the whole,” and “civic improvement,” when merged with their power, influence, and the 1950s consensus political climate, trumped any vocal derision of “downtown interests,” accurate or not, coming from the outlying neighborhoods. The acceptance of expressways was mirrored by downtown business communities elsewhere in the U.S. In 1955 alone, $310 million of highway construction bonds were sold by urban governments.[88] Tellingly, almost all expressways in other cities would converge on their respective central business districts.[89]

In the end, while the opposition to the Mark Twain Expressway achieved concessions, they did so only to the degree to which the historical and current political

[87] Ibid.

[88] Rose, *Interstate*, 65.

[89] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 275.

climate would allow. While relatively powerful within the city's power structure, emboldened by years of social fragmentation that required finding new channels in which to participate in the political process and the accompanying rhetoric, neighborhood residents, improvement and business associations, and ward leaders found themselves subject to much larger forces. They achieved a major change in the expressway route, but were held back by the prevailing rhetoric and power structure. As agents of a consensus-driven coalition of policymakers and downtown political and business interests, engineers provided, in an era that highly valued expertise, technical legitimacy to the broad civic improvements envisioned by that group, which brought political authorization and public funding via bond issues. As state employees legally authorized to direct the expensive expressway planning, they brought the federal funding necessary to complete them.

In the case of urban expressways, state engineers filled the role of experts-in-chief. They provided absolute answers in a time of Cold War anxiety and social change. Their status—reinforced by federal funding for highways, as well as federal housing policy—allowed them to become the primary agents of highway design and placement.

Engineers did not make their decisions without influence coming from other powerful interests. In St. Louis, urban planners influenced expressway placement through the city's rich planning tradition, expressed best through their previous work in the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947. Numerous other cities found engineers and local planners at odds, but not St. Louis. Planners and engineers there coexisted particularly well. Engineers generally did not look at the city as a whole with functional pieces as planners did, but the Elliott Plan and subsequent revisions used previous placement recommendations from the *Comprehensive City Plan*. While Harland Bartholomew, who

retired before the expressway location was solidified, expressed some criticisms of the Elliott line, the City Plan Commission that he helped define approved all plans made by engineers for the Mark Twain Expressway.

In St. Louis, the long-entrenched downtown business community, with similar business interests across the nation, served as early proponents for expressways. The political climate, which deemed robust economic growth the epitome of progress, as well as their money and influence, made their wishes for expansion of industry and the stabilization of downtown to compete with growing suburbs the primary goals of engineers and planners. Their urgings led to federal legislation that would make expressway funding and urban redevelopment more affordable for local city governments.

In the era before the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, which appropriated billions of dollars for construction of a nationwide system of limited-access interstate highways and dropped the city's financial commitment of 50 percent of right-of-way costs down to only 10 percent,[90] members of the oligarchic business community through Civic Progress, Inc., served primarily as primary facilitators in securing public authorization of millions of dollars for local highways via bond issues. Their ability to use the rhetoric of progress, as their predecessors had done, and to mount media campaigns, as well as connect with powerful political leaders, ensured that expressways would become realities in St. Louis. That rhetoric was also used by mayors Joseph Darst and Raymond Tucker to effectively marginalize any protests advocating otherwise.

[90] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch.* October 3, 1956. The city still had to provide 50 percent of the right-of-way cost for the Daniel Boone Expressway because it was not slated to become part of the Interstate Highway system at that time.

It took one individual, Mayor Raymond Tucker, to bring all the groups and perspectives together—expressway proponents and protesters included—to reach a compromise on the Mark Twain Expressway and see it built. Mayor Raymond Tucker possessed the skill and expertise to not only propose massive solutions for the city's problems but also persuade the majority of the voters to fund their implementation. Without his trustworthiness and political abilities, the North Side opposition to the Elliott route may have won the river route they advocated.

Those groups proved to have the upper hand in North St. Louis expressway placement, but the changes forced by neighborhood associations, aldermen, the *Community News,* and other protesters cannot be discounted. Because of the localized focus of St. Louis politics and society—as expressed through Catholic parishes, racism, local business investments, and genuine connection to place—North Side groups united across their fenced-off corners and managed to secure a significant change in the placement of the Mark Twain Expressway. That they were able to make such a substantial adjustment in the highway routing despite rhetoric, consensus, and the power of other interests is remarkable, even if most opponents did not get the final route they wanted.

Epilogue

After the Expressway:
St. Louis and the North Side into the Twenty-First Century

The Mark Twain Expressway was completed in the early 1960s. The Ozark and Boone Expressways followed soon after; then a separate expressway, Interstate 44, was built later in the decade. Downtown business leaders, politicians, and planners got what they wanted—an expressway system with numerous branches all converging on downtown—and they would continue to work for downtown revitalization. The City Plan Commission would continue to produce detailed plans on how to deal with the city's numerous problems, some old, and some new, while engineers would continue to focus on their singular tasks of designing efficient highways. With the passage of the 1955 bond issue, Raymond Tucker showed swift action and shrewd political skill, and though he was helped largely by a national consensus, he was the right man at the right time. His ability to work with numerous different interests—asking citizens to think of the city as a whole over their own interests, but also striking behind-the-scenes deals—helped secure his election as mayor twice more, and solidified his imprint on the city's physical and economic development.

The story of what happened after the construction of the Mark Twain Expressway is a different story than that of the planning process that led to it, but because it is so closely connected to the circumstances surrounding expressway planning, it is worth summarizing. Some say it is a tragic story of a city making many mistakes, or a typical

story of a major city faced with changes so rapid and so powerful that it was truly unable to do anything about it. Did city leaders speed the decline of St. Louis with the same extravagant planning that was meant to modernize and improve it? Pinpointing the difficulty of extracting planning from its effects in postwar St. Louis, historian Eric Sandweiss notes that "'civic improvement' and civic decline came so close to one another in time and space that it was hard, at times, to tell which had come first." Like the central corridor of which Sandweiss writes, it seemed that the attention the city lavished on areas with expressways and urban renewal in order to save them had done much to destroy them.[1]

The North Side felt the effects of both the rapid changes of the postwar era and major civic projects proposed to stop them. One of the first direct casualties of the Mark Twain Expressway was St. Michael's Church. As early as May 1957, the *Community News* reported that "the parish buildings on North 11th street are surrounded by the rubble of homes and business places already razed to make way for the new expressway." On September 1, 1957, the final mass was held for the 108-year-old institution. About 1,000 parishioners and over 200 school children would have to find new religious and educational homes.[2] Writer M.M. Costantin notes that the last mass there "seemed as much a wake for the neighborhoods as for St. Michael's."[3] The remaining 500 parishioners of St. Casimir's Church participated in the last mass there the same month.

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[1] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 234.

[2] "St. Michael's to Hold Last Homecoming: Will Be Razed in September," *North St. Louis Community News*, May 28, 1957.

[3] Costantin, *Sidestreets St. Louis*, 45.

Later that month, St. Michael's Church was demolished to make room for the Mark Twain Expressway.[4]

Adding insult to injury, engineers revised plans for the expressway after its approval by the aldermen. It would now contain eight lanes, instead of six as originally proposed, adding 15 to 20 percent to the construction cost. This allowed for two center express lanes meant to decrease travel times to and from downtown, paid for by funds from the 1955 bond. Stating that it would require "only small increase in cost of right-of-way" was another way of saying that some, but not many more, properties would be demolished.[5] This was exactly the type of bait-and-switch that fed business and improvement associations' suspicions of "downtown interests."

Around 800 homes were destroyed for right-of-way, many in Hyde Park but mostly in Murphy-Blair. Many stores on Hyde Park's Salisbury Street shopping area were demolished.[6] A long-standing African American section in the southern portion of Murphy-Blair was completely wiped off the grid.[7] To the northwest, Walnut Park lost some of its most expensive homes. However, only in the years to come would St. Louis and its North Side neighborhoods witness the full effects of population flight, urban renewal, and expressways, in ways little conceived by downtown decision-makers. This was just the beginning.

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[4]"Final Mass at St. Casimir's Next Sunday," *North St. Louis Community News*, August 28, 1957; "St. Michael's to Hold Last Homecoming: Will Be Razed in September," *North St. Louis Community News*, May 28, 1957.

[5] "Expressway to Have Eight Lanes In Part of City," *North St. Louis Community News*, January 25, 1956.

[6] George McCue, Osmund Overby, and Norbury L. Wayman, *Street Front Heritage: The Bremen/Hyde Park Area of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1976).

[7] Miranda Rabus Rectenwald and Andrew Hurley, *From Village to Neighborhood: A History of Old North St. Louis* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2004), 82-83.

With its massive rights-of-way, limited-access, no-grade crossings, and higher speeds than city streets, the Mark Twain Expressway allowed drivers in St. Louis to bypass everyday street life in favor of commuting, leaving older North Side communities to face the problems of the 1950s alone and even more fenced off than before. Mirroring events experienced in metropolitan areas across the U.S. and indicative of changes that had been occurring on a smaller scale before the expressway, large-scale low-density subdivisions, usually characterized by understated architectural similarity and economic and racial homogeneity, appeared with ever-increasing rapidity on the fringes of St. Louis.[8]

Recently incorporated municipalities such as Jennings, Bellefontaine Neighbors, and Riverview offered isolation from the pressing, complex problems of the central city, and their schools grew accordingly.[9] Florissant, an old community to the northwest first populated by Creole farmers from St. Louis in the early 1780s,[10] became one of the largest suburbs in the area, with other north county communities springing up along the I-70 corridor to Lambert Airport. The single-family detached housing and decentralization of the population reinforced vaguely democratic notions of a landed citizenry, all while the older urban environment was beginning to become a thing of the past for white middle-class St. Louisans.

In June 1954, indicative of sweeping changes in patterns in American economics and culture, the brand new Northland Shopping Center had celebrated its grand opening

[8] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 238-241.

[9] "Additions Planned By Jennings School Due to Enrollment," *North St. Louis Community News*, January 1, 1958. The article notes a steady rise in the number of students since 1954 and subsequent school overcrowding because of the high birth rate and homebuilding.

[10] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 66.

in the north county suburb of Jennings. Although it was not within the St. Louis city limits, it had noticeable repercussions on North St. Louis. Shopping centers were indicative of a new American drive-in culture characterized by trailer parks, drive-in theaters, self-service gas stations, motels, and decentralized factories and offices that transformed how Americans lived, worked, and played.[11] By the late-1950s, ads began appearing in the *Community News* for a particularly apt symbol of that culture: McDonald's Hamburgers.

The way in which older communities attempted to compete reflected this auto-centric culture. New businesses opened in north city, but to a smaller degree, while others responded to the suburban migration and automobile culture with drive-up windows and more parking. For example, the first off-street parking in St. Louis was opened in Baden in the 1950s with a "spectacular dedication." Rob L. Nussbaum, head of the Baden Chamber of Commerce, said the 125-car lot was "part of a civic reawakening."[12] And while Northland Shopping Center was only part of a process already occurring, its dramatic entrance to the St. Louis scene was a harbinger of things to come with the help of the Mark Twain Expressway.

In part, the significance of Northland event had its roots in the 1876 divorce. As Primm notes, "[The city's] inability to expand its limits after 1876 proved to be a crippling deterrent to St. Louis's development."[13] It effectively restricted the city's ability to combat suburbanization throughout the twentieth century by the annexation of new

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[11] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 246-271.

[12] "Plans Made for Baden Parking Lot Dedication," *North St. Louis Community News*, December 11, 1957.

[13] Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 324.

middle-class areas that could revive its tax base.[14] Though unforeseen at the time, it also ensured that the county would become a chief rival of the city for industry and commerce, a competition that the county would increasingly win in the second half of the twentieth century. Without tax dollars supporting city services and infrastructure, the quality of life in the city's urban neighborhoods declined faster than it would have had the city been able to expand its boundaries as many growing western and southern cities did. The construction of the expressway, by one perspective, did not help this fact. While some thought it would bring tax dollars into the city, its huge cost meant less money for other improvements that could benefit the neighborhoods.[15]

The proposal of the Mark Twain Expressway had immediate effects on tax revenue. Previously, the northern St. Louis area Famous-Barr branch department store was slated for construction on North Kingshighway Boulevard on the North Side. A year and a half after the announcement of Northland's opening, executives of the May Company, owner of Famous-Barr, chose to open a new store in the county, at the proposed Northland Shopping Center in Jennings. May had a downtown Famous-Barr location, but the company's expansion into other parts of the city as well as suburbs such as Jennings and Clayton showed that they were following their customer base or at least predicting where it would grow.[16] Even though policymakers looked to such occurrences as proof that expressways were needed, the announcement conveyed a sense of inevitability about the expressway and its effects: people were moving to the suburbs, and when the expressway was complete, even more people would move there. Thus, opening

[14] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 150.

[15] Rectenwald and Hurley, *From Village to Neighborhood*,82-83.

[16] "Famous Sells Property on N. Kingshighway," *North St. Louis Community News*, February 18, 1953.

the branch store in the suburbs, not in the city, was a sound investment. It could be argued then that the *proposal* of the Mark Twain Expressway sparked just as many changes as what had been witnessed before the proposal or after the construction, and served as a turning point in the health and overall vitality of the North Side as well as of downtown and the city as a whole. The clearing for and construction of the expressway starting in 1955-56 and its completion as a portion of Interstate 70 in 1961 only solidified the drastic changes already in motion.

The actual immediate effects of the opening of Northland—and of other shopping centers such as Bissell Hills, which opened two months later in Bellefontaine Neighbors—on north city businesses are unclear, but the old neighborhood businesses' advertising in the local paper, anemic in style and presence compared to the modern ads of the new shopping center, provides some clues.[17] As numerous stores opened at Northland and the customer base shifted to the county, merchants at the North Fourteenth Street shopping area started to refer to the old traditional commercial strip for the Murphy-Blair neighborhood as the "North 14th Shopping Center." The lure of the "White Way," as the strip had once grandly been described after new street lights had been installed there in the 1920s, seemed to be dimming.[18]

Traditional promotional events such as the Water Tower-area Halloween window paintings were forced to compete with similar, larger events at Northland, as the membership of the Water Tower merchants association appeared to decline to just a

[17] "Bissell Hills Shopping Center to Open," *North St. Louis Community News*, August 8, 1954.

[18] Rectenwald and Hurley, *From Village to Neighborhood*, 68.

handful.[19] Business eventually worsened, financial problems ensued, and some businesses closed or moved, all of which had social reverberations. One woman commented that "there was a father and son [who owned a business in North St. Louis]…business was so bad one Christmas, they went home to their car in the garage and turned it on and died."[20]

Downtown did not fare particularly well either, and certainly not as business leaders and their political and professional allies had planned. Despite numerous redevelopment projects such as the modernist-inspired Busch Memorial Stadium, which opened in 1965 as the new home of the Cardinals, and the construction of new skyscrapers, downtown's dominance continued to slide. Downtown Clayton and the decentralized St. Louis County would become chief competitors for corporate office space, while downtown St. Louis continually relied on demolition of historic structures for parking or new high-rises that sometimes were never be built as promised.

Slowly, corporate offices either moved to the suburbs or to the Sunbelt, or would be bought out by other companies.[21] In the early 1980s, Dillard's bought Sidney Baer's Stix, Baer, and Fuller. The downtown store of the influential Civic Progress member would become a branch of the chain, and would finally be shuttered in 2001. Famous-

[19] Photograph, "Water Tower Officers," *North St. Louis Community News*, November 12, 1958.

[20] Elsie and Millie Bratkowski interview, Old North St. Louis Oral History, Old North St. Louis Restoration Group Archives.

[21] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 218. Jackson notes that St. Louis lost a staggering 300 factories to the Sunbelt during the 1970s.

Barr, along with numerous local department stores across the United States, was bought and became a local branch of Macy's.[22]

Though other U.S. cities posted greater real population losses, arguably no city fell harder or farther than St. Louis from the 1950s onward. Historian Kenneth Jackson writes that the city, though typical of older U.S. cities, served as "a premier example of urban abandonment."[23] In the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947, Bartholomew had urged the government and the citizens to prepare for a city population of 900,000 by 1970.[24] But when the population statistics for 1960 were released, the problems the plan had hoped to fix began, despite some successes, to haunt the city in unexpected ways. The city's population dropped from 856,796 in 1950 to 750,026 in 1960, a staggering decline for a city of St. Louis's size, prompting many advocates of expressways to push for them even more, including Interstate 44 through southwest St. Louis and the North-South Distributor that would encircle downtown. The population dropped again to 622,236 in 1970, and even further to 453,085 in 1980, its most dramatic drop ever. St. Louis, once the fourth-largest city in the United States, by 2000 descended to fifty-second place with fewer than 350,000 residents.

The story was different in St. Louis County. In 1950, the county contained about 406,000, but by 1970, as figure 1 shows, the county surpassed the city in population and became the primary economic engine of the region. By 2000, the county housed over one million residents. Instead of stemming the tide of migration to the suburbs as they were

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[22] Fogelson, *Downtown*, 387. Fogelson notes that the trend toward decentralization of office space to other areas of the metro area became increasingly common as the 1950s progressed.

[23] Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 217-218.

[24] *Comprehensive City Plan*. Introduction.

intended to do, a 1973 report stated that the interstate highways in St. Louis had led to population and industrial dispersal to the county.[25] Public officials at that time would continue to deal with the same old problem of strangulation of downtown traffic, unaware that the problem was increasingly being resolved, to the detriment of downtown interests, by massive decentralization spurred in part by expressways.

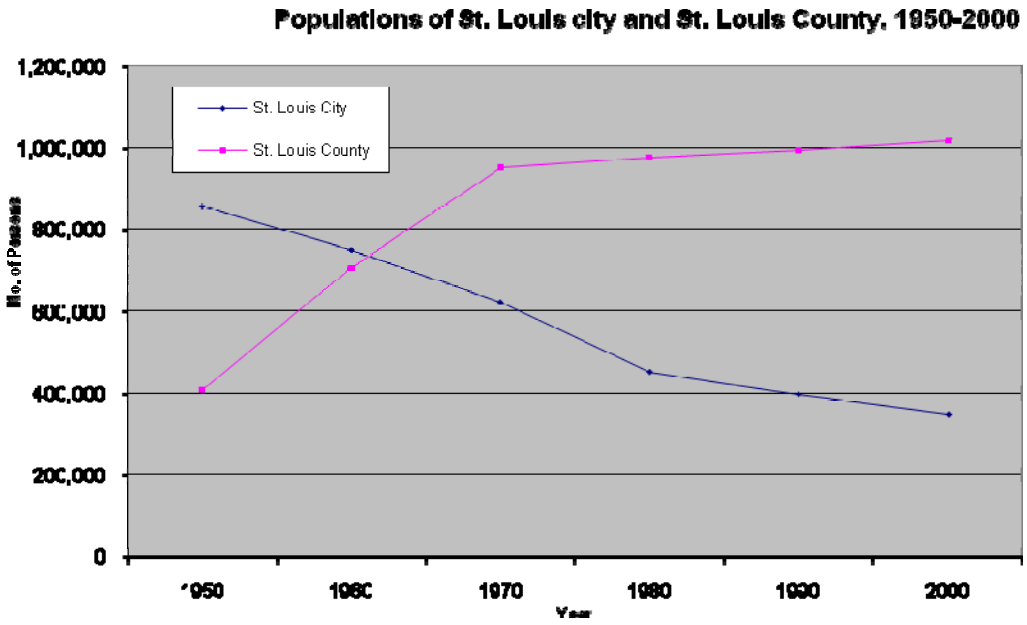

Figure 1: Populations of St. Louis city and St. Louis County, 1950-2000. Note year of Mark Twain Expressway completion, 1961.

In fact, decentralization became a larger problem for the St. Louis region than expected. Between 1950 and 2000, land size of the metro area increased by 152.1 percent without comparable regional population growth.[26] As single-family dwellings became the

[25] Peter DeLeon and John Enns, "The Impact Upon Metropolitan Dispersion: St. Louis" (Santa Monica, Cal.: The Rand Corporation, Sep. 1973).

[26] David Laslo, "The St. Louis Region, 1950-2000: How We Have Changed," in Brady Baybeck and E. Terrence Jones, eds., *St. Louis Metromorphosis: Past Trends and Future Directions* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 2004), 20.

dominant housing choice after 1950, the subsequent building boom initially brought residents into St. Louis County, where the bulk of over 585,000 housing units were be built between 1950 and 2000.[27] Residential dispersal in the metropolitan region did not stop at the St. Louis County borders, however. By the 1980s and 1990s, new housing construction in outlying metropolitan counties in Missouri such as St. Charles, Jefferson, Lincoln, Warren, and Franklin, as well as several counties in Illinois, accelerated.[28]

New neighborhood associations in the suburbs expressed some of the same characteristics and used some of the same tactics as their predecessors in the city, often with more successful results. As Sugrue writes, "suburban communities were themselves defended communities, whose invisible walls against 'invasions' were far more difficult to breach than the constantly shifting, insecure lines that divided the city."[29] While urban neighborhoods on St. Louis's North Side had boundaries difficult for outsiders to penetrate, white suburbanites could wall themselves off, if only temporarily, from African Americans and the powerful, less-locally-focused political and business community that asked them to sacrifice for the good of the whole. No longer did they have to relent in the face of pressure from "downtown interests." New residents of the increasingly balkanized north St. Louis County (there are today at least 48 different municipalities or census designated areas, as well as unincorporated parts, in just that one portion of St. Louis County) effectively walled themselves off in communities that in

[27] Ibid.," 23.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 245; the presence of north county improvement associations was visible in the *North St. Louis Community News* as early as 1960, when they allied themselves with a city group, "Council of North County Improvement Associations And North St. Louis Lions Club Join Riverview Drive in Workhouse Protest," *North St. Louis Community News*, March 16, 1960.

some cases contained as few as 1,000 residents. Though it really never went away, "the fenced-off corner," notes Sandweiss, "is back in style."[30]

The North Side felt the effects of radical change more than almost any other area of St. Louis. Today, neighborhoods in what is left of Murphy-Blair, Hyde Park, and areas cleared for urban renewal are in the worst condition. Areas to the northwest are generally in better condition, but vary substantially in degree. Many subdivisions there are extremely attractive and well-maintained, while some areas are in relative decline.

The 1960s showed consistent though not necessarily dramatic drops in population across North St. Louis neighborhoods that witnessed expressway construction, with the biggest drops in Murphy-Blair and smaller ones in Hyde Park and Walnut Park. Between 1960 and 1970, the population of Near North Side neighborhoods such as Murphy-Blair dropped dramatically, by some estimates and boundary designations nearly by half. As early as 1972, just over a decade after the completion of the Mark Twain Expressway, one active neighborhood citizen, George Eberle, Jr., of the Grace Hill Settlement House, commented that "it looks like somebody blew a whistle and everybody left."[31] Population held on longest in Walnut Park and Baden, but by 1990 the number of residents in those areas dropped dramatically. By the early 1980s, many Hyde Park residents believed the construction of the highway was the beginning of decline for the neighborhood.[32]

Following the construction of the Mark Twain Expressway, old racial dividing lines such as Cass Avenue and Fairgrounds Park were increasingly regarded with

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[30] Sandweiss, *St. Louis: The Evolution*, 237.

[31] Andrew Wilson, "The Near North Side," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. March 27, 1972. The reporter was referring to the area bounded by the Mississippi River, Cass Street, Palm Street, and Jefferson Avenue.
[32] Linda Olivia Nichols, "Community and the Elderly: An Urban Example" (PhD. Thesis, Washington University, 1982), 58.

indifference. As Sugrue writes about Detroit, "The disruptive effects of highway construction dampened any incipient resistance to black movement into the area. The depreciation of property values in blocks adjacent to the expressway, along with the flight of hundreds of white families, opened formerly closed streets to black newcomers."[33] As white St. Louisans moved to the suburbs in great numbers, the violence that met African Americans if they crossed invisible barriers decreased in frequency. "Whites who had patrolled the borders to prevent black movement," writes Sugrue, "quickly abandoned their defenses and left the racial boundary unguarded."[34]

Consistent with other cities, African Americans in the 1960s and 1970s moved into North Side neighborhoods in the expressway path in increasing numbers, but racial integration met mixed results. Though some older residents remained, and some North Side neighborhoods expressed a renewed sense of community,[35] white flight continued. Out-migration to other parts of the city in the northwest and to South St. Louis increased. Poor black residents who had previously lived in the squalid conditions of the Mill Creek Valley moved into housing projects, but also into neighborhoods that had long been all white.[36] Movement of white families to the suburbs accelerated.

In the late 1960s, white and black residents of Hyde Park struggled for racial harmony through neighborhood solidarity after consistent violence between white and black gangs and the firebombing of a black family's home. "All of this," one resident

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[33] Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, 242.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Costantin, *Sidestreets St. Louis*, 46.

[36] 1950 and 1960 Censuses. The populations of tracts in which urban renewal areas were located dropped dramatically by the 1960 census. For an oral history confirmation of migration northward from the Mill Creek Valley, see Louise Thompson interview by Teresa Springer, May 3, 2003.

said, “is a microcosm of what’s happening everywhere. . . . North St. Louis can’t build a great big fence around all the black people,” he continued. “North St. Louis will have to face this. And in facing it, they’ll have to face themselves.[37]

Although racial violence in certain areas eventually declined, racism would persist. In the late 1960s, after a small wave of racial transition that brought different levels of hostility from the aging white population, the Walnut Park Improvement Association even considered a plan for the organization to buy homes owned by African Americans and sell them to white buyers.[38] Residents formed a new, more inclusive community council, but neighborhood integration effectively stopped white migrants from settling in Walnut Park.[39] Later in the twentieth century, African Americans, who had been barred from North Side neighborhoods first legally, then socially, left the city in great numbers for the suburbs, primarily ones in north St. Louis County, just as whites did years before, renewing the suburbanization process.[40]

As the middle-class tax base left the North Side, the city government was left without the ability to provide the level of infrastructure and amenity services they once had, indirectly exacerbating the problems they had already been dealing with for years. Racial tensions, drug use, and other ills were influenced by the lack of trash collection, street cleaning, public transportation for poorer residents, and an overall neglect of certain neighborhoods in favor of wealthier, better maintained areas. Residences and storefronts increasingly fell vacant, only to sit and rot, awaiting repairs, demolition, or

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[37] Robert Adams, “Neighbors Seek End to Unrest,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 9, 1969.

[38] Ulery, “Walnut Park,” 94-98, 104.

[39] Ibid., 105, 107.

[40] Laslo, “The St. Louis Region,” 5-7.

fires of unexplainable origins.[41] Few, if any, businesses remain in older shopping districts such as Salisbury Street and long stretches of West Florissant Avenue. Practically every building in the old White Water Tower loop was demolished while many that remain were vacated.

Crime increased in once stable areas for many reasons in the 1960s and 1970s. Though Hyde Park remained more stable than surrounding areas, the murder of prominent restaurant owner Mike Lograsso in his establishment in 1968, by four youths demanding money, prompted the victim's son to say, "for the decent people that are left this neighborhood is also gone."[42] Following the incident, James Adkins, staff member of the Hyde Park Neighborhood Corporation, commented, "The neighborhood is losing more than friends. . . . The streets are dark and getting darker. People are afraid to be neighborly anymore."[43] In the mid 1960s, crime increased in Walnut Park as well. After several robberies, Woltman's Jewelry, a neighborhood landmark, closed for good.[44]

By the early 1970s, Hyde Park was surrounded by what the *Globe-Democrat* referred to as "changing neighborhoods." Incidents of beatings and robberies increased in the 1970s, prompting one citizen to claim, "This neighborhood is getting to be like an island. There's no way to get out of here without going through one of the bad areas around us," and another to say "Whatever I've got to do, I get done before dark."[45] By

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[41] Costantin, *Sidestreets St. Louis*, 46.

[42] Robert Teuscher, "Neighborhood Dead, Mike's Son Says," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, December 9, 1968. Mike's friend Thomas Croce was also shot but survived.

[43] "Neighbors Seek End to Unrest," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, December 9, 1968.

[44] Ulery, "Walnut Park," 77.

[45] Charles E. Burgess, "The Island of Hyde Park," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, September 18, 1971.

1970, one local neighborhood group, the Montgomery-Hyde Park Housing Corp., began the willful demolition of homes in Hyde Park, citing safety concerns,[46] only to be taken to court by city officials for not tearing down enough.[47] Several other revitalization plans were attempted in the North Side neighborhoods throughout the 1980s and 1990s, but racism and crime often posed problems. By the 1990s, the Hyde Park area, College Hill, and other adjacent areas were commonly known to police as the "Bloody Fifth," because of the substantial number of murders and other violent crimes within that police district.[48] The Mark Twain Expressway, by then known as Interstate 70, provided a clear pathway out of the neighborhood to a more hopeful future.

The automobile remained the focus of planners' attention in the coming decades, just as it had been in the *Comprehensive City Plan* of 1947, with accessibility and parking in downtown the key ingredients. A similar attempt was made in North St. Louis out of desperation, when merchants of the North Fourteenth Street Businessmen's Association in the 1970s planned the transformation of the North Fourteenth Shopping District into a pedestrian mall.[49] Hailed by the *Globe-Democrat* as a "Miracle on North 14th St.," the two-block area was closed to automobile traffic and refurbished at a cost of $500,000, all coming from the Model Cities program, the latest federal attempt to rebuild U.S. cities.[50] Stores would not be upscale and instead be similar to the type "that are there now serving

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[46] Judson W. Calkins, "Neighborhood Group Enters Business of House Demolition," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* August 27, 1970.

[47] Gerald Meyer, "Neighborhood Unit Caught In Squeeze," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 16, 1973.

[48] Ward, *Community Education and Crime Prevention*, 131, 43.

[49] Hurley and Rectenwald, *From Village to Neighborhood*, 89.

[50] "Miracle on North 14th St.," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 12, 1976.

the predominantly elderly and low-income neighborhood."[51] Despite high hopes, the concept failed miserably, pushing the area into further decline. Accommodating the car to such a great extent had already discouraged street life that, in this case, could not be brought back by providing off-street parking.[52] In general, pedestrian malls across the nation failed to deliver the economic turnaround proponents promised.

Even the *North St. Louis Community News* would change its perspective to fit the consensus. The acceptance of the inevitability and desirability of the automobile, out of which expressways were born, would by the late 1950s be expressed by the previously combative North Side publication. In 1958, the paper's staff was "proud" to participate in a campaign sponsored by the Greater St. Louis Automotive Association "in its endeavor to sell more automobiles. [Every] type of business will benefit if this promotion is successful."[53]

By the late 1950s the publishers of the *Community News* began releasing a completely different edition of the paper for large areas of north St. Louis County. They had published multiple editions in the 1930s for areas such as Baden and the West Florissant shopping area, but the changes brought to the newer separate version of the paper were more striking. Reflecting the sweeping growth of the suburbs and the fragmentation of the region, stories relating to north city would either be moved below

[51] Ibid.

[52] Hurley and Rectenwald, *From Village to Neighborhood*, 91.

[53] "You Auto Buy Now," *North St. Louis Community News*, April 23, 1958.

the fold or omitted entirely from the front page.[54] Even in the pages of the local paper, the North Side was slowly left behind and forgotten.

Additionally, the offices of the paper moved to the suburbs. By the 2000s, the distribution of the paper—over parts of north St. Louis County and suburban St. Charles County to the northwest—reflect the further spreading out of the region and hollowing out of the central city. One edition of the paper, *O'Fallon Community News*, serves the rapidly growing middle-class suburb to the northwest. Another edition, *Crossroads Community News*, serves a suburban area even farther west. By 2009, the newspaper that helped rally North Side citizens to fight downtown policymakers and business interests over fifty years earlier is no longer distributed in the city at all. Time will only tell if O'Fallon, current home of the *Community News* offices, is only a temporary stop in the fifty-plus-year migration of white working and middle classes from St. Louis city, through North St. Louis, and farther outward, or if its vitality will persist.[55]

Catholic parishes once provided stability for North St. Louis ethnic communities, shielded them from outsiders, and encouraged racial separation, but by 2000, over twenty that existed in 1950 had either been closed or, in a few cases, relocated, usually to the suburbs. Only seven remain today. The new St. Casimir's Catholic Church, whose population had already fragmented by the time its parishioners had petitioned the city to stop the Mark Twain Expressway, was not constructed near the site of the demolished building within the old parish boundaries. Instead it opened in St. Louis County, shorn of

[54] The archives of the *North St. Louis Community News* suggest that different editions had also been published as early as 1931 and as late as the 1940s. The editions included separate publications mostly for city business districts such as Baden but also areas that spanned portions of both the city and county.

[55] Map, distribution of the *Community News*, http://www.mycnews.com, accessed May 20, 2009.

its ethnic affiliation. While parishes were typically immovable, Archdiocese officials made the decision to follow its parishioners to their new communities. But in 1992, even the new St. Casimir's would close its doors for good.[56]

While much was lost with the construction of the Mark Twain Expressway, much was gained. The construction of the expressway spurred the historic preservation movement in the city. In the early 1960s, citizens who successfully saved the Bissell Mansion in the Hyde Park-College Hill area from demolition for Mark Twain Expressway—they managed to persuade city officials to move a small portion of the highway several feet to the west—formed the Landmarks Association of St. Louis, the city's official preservation agency. The group's formation reflected a growing interest in preservation across the country, but also showed how the Mark Twain Expressway debate could shape official local preservation policy. Ironically, had the construction of the Mark Twain Expressway not caused so much destruction, then St. Louis may have never developed a landmarks commission, without which many more historic structures and neighborhoods might have been lost to numerous factors. Several city neighborhoods were granted city landmark or national historic district status due to the efforts of the Landmarks Association. Three national historic districts—Murphy-Blair, Saints Cyril and Methodius, and Mullanphy—are located in the Murphy-Blair area, while the Hyde Park neighborhood includes the first North Side historic district. Grassroots rehabilitation in the old Murphy-Blair neighborhood (rechristened as Old North St. Louis), serves as a hard-fought bright spot, as do individual projects such as the Falstaff Columbia Brewery redevelopment (itself located in the Clemens House/Columbia Brewery Historic District

[56] Archdiocese of St. Louis website, www.archstl.org/archives, accessed May 20, 2009.

between Old North St. Louis and St. Louis Place Park), and the efforts to open North Fourteenth Street to vehicular traffic in 2009. To be sure, such efforts over the last fifty years in both that neighborhood and in parts of Hyde Park were likely the most effective deterrents to blight, though it should be noted that buildings are lost every year.[57]

We will never know to what extent the city would have declined if such sweeping civic improvements such as expressways and urban renewal had not been attempted, but further flight to the suburbs was certainly not the intended result. We will also never know if North St. Louisans would have been more successful if they had allied themselves with the nearly identical anti-Elliott Plan movement that was occurring in South St. Louis concerning the proposed Ozark Expressway (see Appendix). It is likely that the same localized political structure that gave them the power to fight downtown interests also kept them from working on a city-wide basis and thus severely hampered their ability to fight consensus and the rhetoric of progress.

By the 1970s, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, and urban unrest awakened political activism and led to the rejection of conformity. Furthermore the halt to U.S. economic growth would undermine the long-dominant liberal consensus.[58] Highway fights would reflect this national political, social, and cultural shift. Unlike the Mark Twain Expressway fight, the fight in the 1970s against the North-South Distributor highway, also known as Route 755—which if built would have sliced and separated the near North Side from the rest of the city (see figure 2)—would cross cultural, class, and racial boundaries to unite people in one cause: to stop the highway. Also unlike in the

[57] Carolyn Hewes Toft with Lynn Josse, *St. Louis: Landmarks & Historic Districts*, 146-162. There are currently no historic districts in northwest St. Louis. The nearest district, The Ville, is located southwest of Fairgrounds Park.

[58] Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 302, 431.

1950s, North Side groups would be joined in solidarity by a South Side group based in Lafayette Square.

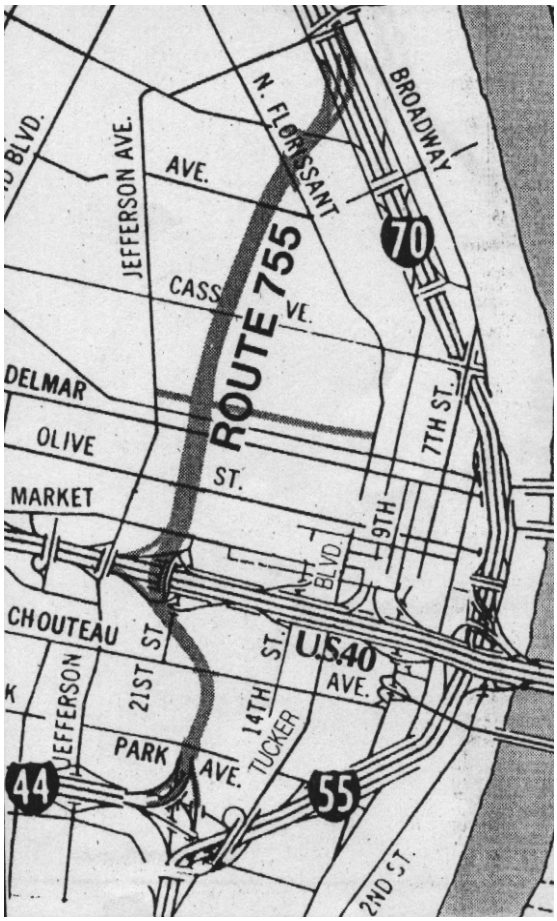

Figure 2: Proposed North-South Distributor, or Route 755, late 1970s.
Source: *St. Louis Globe-Democrat.*

Still, consensus showed its legacy. Downtown leaders who pushed for the highway, such as Mayor Jim Conway (Tucker, long gone by this point, had been defeated in his bid for a fourth term in 1965 by fellow Democrat Alfonso Cervantes), and state engineers presented reasons remarkably similar to ones used in planning the city's first expressways: to end traffic congestion and encourage economic development. State engineer Frank Kriz stated, "If people think the highways are congested now, they

haven't seen like what it's going to be like in the 1980s without the distributor highway."[59] The highway, thanks greatly to the neighborhood groups using stronger rhetoric than ever before ("Pave Conway" was one simple slogan employed), was not built.[60]

The cycle of change, started before but accelerated by the Mark Twain Expressway, continues. Only time will determine the fate of St. Louis's largely forgotten North Side neighborhoods. Interestingly, some of the modest suburban communities that once provided havens for thousands of white residents fleeing the central city are witnessing problems similar to those that North St. Louis neighborhoods faced in the 1940s and 1950s.[61] What condition *those* communities will be in years from now is unclear, and the passage of time provides only ambiguous clues.

While 10,000 residents showed up in the dense Hyde Park area for the rededication of the White Water Tower in 1949, approximately 10,000 people, local suburbanites and others who drove there, attended the grand opening of the Northland Famous-Barr store in August 1955.[62] By the 1960s, five miles to the southeast, while Northland and other suburban shopping centers experienced prosperity and a seemingly expansive future, the Hyde Park Community Council advocated tearing down the companion to the White Water Tower, the landmark red brick water tower several blocks

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[59] Robert L. Joiner, "Neighbors Mobilize To Fight North-South Route," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 4, 1978.

[60] Rectenwald and Hurley, *From Village to Neighborhood*, 84-85.

[61] Malcolm Gay, "The Little City That Couldn't," *The Riverfront Times*, July 5, 2006.

[62] "Huge Throng Jams Northland Center For Famous Opening," *North St. Louis Community News*, August 24, 1955.

to the east within the neighborhood, because of the high cost of maintenance.[63] Most of Northland Shopping Center, after years of slow business and increasing storefront vacancies, was demolished in 2005. In a twist of fate, the water towers remain to this day as worn North St. Louis historic landmarks, clearly visible from one's automobile on Interstate 70, awaiting a different kind of progress.

[63] "Hyde Park Group Favors Razing Old Water Tower," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, March 15, 1962.

Appendix

Other Expressways:
The Region-wide Divisiveness of Expressways and Rhetoric

Criticisms from other parts of the city show that North Side opposition was not unique and emphasize the historical disconnection between the fenced-off corners and the downtown-defined wider setting. South St. Louis, where the Ozark Expressway would require similar slicing of neighborhoods, would display characteristics of a region-wide disconnection between the parts and the whole. The rhetoric expressed by South Side residents—remarkably similar to statements made by North St. Louis protesters—would also highlight how fragmentation kept neighborhoods on opposite sides of town from uniting for a nearly identical cause.

Like letters from North Side protesters to the *Community News*, letters from other neighborhoods to public officials provide windows into the different facets of that disconnection. Many were written in the interest of saving one's property, while others were written assuming that a certain route was inevitable. In the latter case, the homeowner simply wanted to know how much money he or she would get for the property. Other homeowners expressed frustration that the city had not yet acquired their homes because they wanted to sell immediately. They would not know whether or not to spend money to keep up their properties, and worried that they could not get much, if any, money if they sold them.[1] To some, progress would occur too slowly.

[1] Robert Duffe to Mrs. R. Fecher, June 17, 1955, Tuckers Papers, Highways Folder.

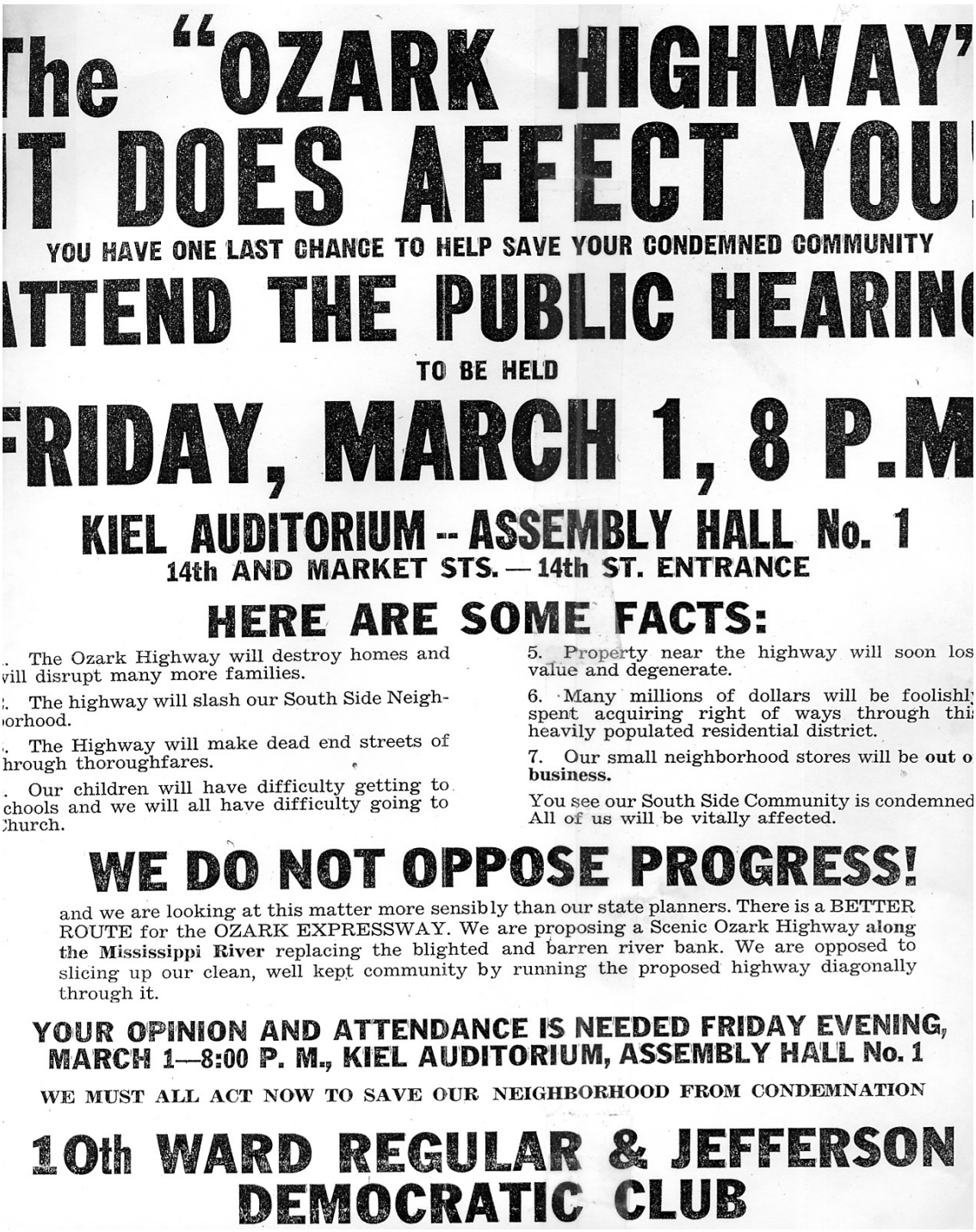
But many residents expressed a more disgruntled and retaliatory perspective concerning the proposed Ozark Expressway. Like protesters in North St. Louis, many suggested that the city should build a river route through South St. Louis instead of cutting through South Side neighborhoods. In an angry letter to Mayor Raymond Tucker, Harry A. Paszkiewicz presented a thorough overview of common complaints and suggestions, characterizing his protest as the common St. Louisan versus sinister downtown interests. He equated those opposing the highway as "the whole" while those who proposed and supported it were "private interests," who worked for "the welfare of only a chosen few." Traditional suspicion of downtown and West End interests persisted into the late 1950s, as well: "Is there something you care not to disclose to the general public at the present time? Who is to benefit financially by all this? It is not the general public—of this I am sure!"[2]

Furthering the dichotomy, Paszkiewicz presented Tucker with two choices:

1. A beautiful riverfront highway which can serve everyone and will add to the present beauty of our city.

2. A South Saint Louis divided and paralyzed by a super highway which will depreciate property value, discourage home buyers, stalmate further growth of community in question, decrease present community population (through forced evictions in path of highway), destroy many valuable homes, decrease city's revenue from taxes, in part hinder local traffic, and destroy the beauty of our South St. Louis area.

[2] Harry A. Paszkiewicz to Tucker, February 22, 1957, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.



The "OZARK HIGHWAY"
IT DOES AFFECT YOU!

YOU HAVE ONE LAST CHANCE TO HELP SAVE YOUR CONDEMNED COMMUNITY

ATTEND THE PUBLIC HEARING

TO BE HELD

FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 8 P.M.

KIEL AUDITORIUM -- ASSEMBLY HALL No. 1
14th AND MARKET STS. — 14th ST. ENTRANCE

HERE ARE SOME FACTS:

. The Ozark Highway will destroy homes and vill disrupt many more families.

. The highway will slash our South Side Neighborhood.

. The Highway will make dead end streets of hrough thoroughfares.

. Our children will have difficulty getting to chools and we will all have difficulty going to Church.

5. Property near the highway will soon los value and degenerate.

6. Many millions of dollars will be foolishly spent acquiring right of ways through this heavily populated residential district.

7. Our small neighborhood stores will be **out o business.**

You see our South Side Community is condemned All of us will be vitally affected.

WE DO NOT OPPOSE PROGRESS!

and we are looking at this matter more sensibly than our state planners. There is a BETTER ROUTE for the OZARK EXPRESSWAY. We are proposing a Scenic Ozark Highway **along the Mississippi River** replacing the blighted and barren river bank. We are opposed to slicing up our clean, well kept community by running the proposed highway diagonally through it.

YOUR OPINION AND ATTENDANCE IS NEEDED FRIDAY EVENING, MARCH 1—8:00 P. M., KIEL AUDITORIUM, ASSEMBLY HALL No. 1

WE MUST ALL ACT NOW TO SAVE OUR NEIGHBORHOOD FROM CONDEMNATION

10th WARD REGULAR & JEFFERSON DEMOCRATIC CLUB

Figure 1: South Side Protest Flier Concerning Ozark Expressway, mid 1950s.
Source: Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

There was no middle ground. “Even the Board of Aldermen have voiced their objections!” he continued. “You say it would cost the city thousands of dollars more to put the highway along the riverfront! Why, then, won’t you produce the facts and figures to prove this point, and we have demanded so often of you to do?” [3]

“I wish to note that there is a wave of tension and unrest in opposition to your proposal by the home owners, and otherwise, of South Saint Louis,” Paszkiewicz continued. “This is slowly rising to a crest, ready to break through and with it engulf and destroy your entire political support from our community.” Perhaps referring to the earlier debated Mark Twain, Paszkiewicz wrote, “You can fool the public once, but it is only a fish who will fall for the same bait a second time.”[4] Paszkiewicz had local leaders on his side. South Side aldermen, such as Albert Villa and Joseph W. Martino “delayed right-of-way [of the Ozark Expressway] for years.”[5]

Residents and local leaders in other parts of the city opposed expressway projects in their particular parts of the region, suggesting much about the historical structure of politics in St. Louis and the manner in which expressways became concrete realities. For the Daniel Boone Expressway, which would run through the central corridor, designers of the Elliott Plan preferred a route north of Forest Park for interstate express traffic because right-of-way costs would be reduced by following an old abandoned railroad right-of-way in the area.[6] However, this West End area was also home to stately mansions that lined the streets of the city’s most exclusive private places. The affluent suburbs of

[3] Harry A. Paszkiewicz to Tucker, February 22, 1957, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Paper found in Curtis Papers, WHMC, f.6413.

[6] Elliott Plan, 9.

Clayton and University City, which would also lose homes, protested the route, as well. On top of that, the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis argued that such an expressway running north of Forest Park was "unacceptable to St. Louis County and the communities adjacent thereto."[7]

The City Plan Commission produced a report with recommendations showing different proposed routes.[8] The city councils of Webster Groves, Kirkwood, Warson Woods, Brentwood, Creve Coeur, Frontenac, and Ladue all passed resolutions supporting the Daniel Boone Expressway, while the council from a municipality that would lose property to right-of-way, Richmond Heights, as well as the adjacent Maplewood, which would not be served at all, passed resolutions in opposition to the proposed routing.[9]

Faced with a wealth of opposition, including influential voices from the West End and the adjoining affluent suburbs, the route was moved south of Forest Park, as recommended by the Chamber of Commerce. With that move, the older Oakland Express Highway (also known as the Red Feather Expressway) was modified to become the current Boone Expressway, also known as Interstate 64 or more commonly as U.S. Highway 40. Forest Park Avenue, a slower speed limited-access parkway, which serves as a circulation route through the city and a small portion of the county, now sits in the Elliott route area. Proof of the broad influence that William Eichenser and countless others from the outlying neighborhoods derided over the years, the parkway was, as

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[7] Pamphlet, Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis, "Needed Links in the Highway System of the Metropolitan St. Louis Area," July, 1954, 7, Tucker Papers, Highways Folder.

[8] St. Louis City Planning Commission, "Daniel Boone Expressway: Staff Recommendations," date unknown, probably 1954. Tucker Paper. Highways. Folder 2.

[9] Resolutions from Association of Webster Groves Property Owners, Kirkwood, Warson Woods, Glendale, Brentwood, Creve Couer, Frontenac, and Ladue, 1954; letter from city of Maplewood, September 3, 1954; all found in Tucker Papers. Highways, Folder 3.

recommended, "metropolitan in character of service and not intended to serve commercial vehicles."[10]

The debate over the proposed Interstate 44 would provide a remarkably striking example of citizens working within the consensus framework while echoing the city's social and political tensions. The highway, it was widely accepted by the late 1950s, would become a reality in the next five years, so the only way to fight its effects on one's own neighborhood or property was to move it somewhere else. Like Tucker had done concerning the routing of the Mark Twain Expressway, elected officials deferred specific routing protests to the State Highway Commission.[11] After years of dealing with citizen protests over freeways, the State Highway Commission "upset its normal procedure for selecting a final route" by coming to St. Louis themselves and meeting with citizens. They also had become adept in dealing with protests, in part by recognizing the need for citizens to voice their concerns directly to policymakers rather than immediately dismissing them. "We realize this matter has become a hot potato," said State Highway Commission Chairman Leo A. Fisher. [12]

An early though slightly different version of the expressway had been considered as early as 1947, but the Elliott Plan noted the route was unsuitable because of the difficulty of acquiring right-of-way and the large number of "improved properties."

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[10] Pamphlet, Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis, "Needed Links in the Highway System of the Metropolitan St. Louis Area," July, 1954, 7, found in Tucker Papers, Highways Folder. Opposition did not stop there. For instance, when citizens on two streets in the adjacent suburb of University City learned of plans for an exit ramp from Forest Park Parkway, they threatened to secede from the city, Joseph D. Salvia, "Residents along 2 quiet U. City streets threaten to secede over highway ramp," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, April 25, 1974.

[11] Numerous letters between U.S. Representative Thomas B. Curtis and constituents, 1959, found in Curtis Papers, Folders 6395-6404, WHMC-Columbia.

[12] "The Highway That's a Hot Potato," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 20, 1959.

Deeming it impractical, the report claimed "the communities involved have stated very strongly their objections to routing the expressways through the area."[13] Following the passage of the Interstate Highways Act in 1956, an official plan was written for I-44.[14] Three or more routes through the city were discussed, some with only slight variations to avoid specific areas or properties.

Citizens in both the city and county organized in opposition to certain routes, such as the South Side Committee, which organized to fight three specific routes.[15] But a meeting held at an assembly room at Kiel Auditorium in 1959 that drew an overflow crowd of 700 people best displayed the nature of opposition to the highway. Extra chairs were brought in and loudspeakers set up outside for people who could not fit into the room. Over three sessions, the numerous people, including representatives from some South St. Louis improvement associations, spoke on seventeen different proposed locations for the interstate highway.[16]

The excessive number of route alternatives—and the fact that individuals spoke for and against each of them—point out the lack of a united front among the opposition. Consciously aware of their mutual problem, one speaker aptly pointed out that "there seems to be a theme developing here: 'Please take this highway somewhere else.'" Still, he went on to note, "and I'm afraid I'm going to say the same thing." Countless citizens—from attorneys to housewives—would present their positions, so many of

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[13] Elliott Plan, 9.

[14] Missouri State Highway Commission, *Report on Alternate Locations: Interstate Route 44 in the City and County of St. Louis, Missouri, November, 1959*, (Jefferson City, Mo.: Missouri State Highway Commission).

[15] Document, 1959 or 1960. Thomas Curtis Papers. f.6411, WHMC.

[16] "The Highway That's a Hot Potato," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 20, 1959.

which were different except for one key point: no one wanted to completely stop the highway, but no one wanted it through their front yard.[17] Fighting it outright seemed impossible when automobile ownership was on the rise and the consensus held that the highway was necessary and inevitable.

Residents from suburban enclaves outlined their positions on Interstate 44 as well. Displaying divisions similar to those witnessed in parts of St. Louis city, they fought for their own homes and livelihoods. Working through the Association of Webster Groves Property Owners (which had supported the final official routing of the Boone Expressway), residents of suburban Webster Groves waged an unsuccessful but very well organized campaign against the proposed route which would divide the town in half.[18] During the December 1959 hearing, representatives from Webster Groves, armed with detailed maps, pleaded for the highway to be built through neighboring Crestwood. Unsurprisingly in St. Louis's historical context, the mayor of Crestwood spoke on why he thought it should be built through Webster Groves instead.[19] Only one speaker at the hearing voiced opposition to all routes.[20]

In the city, the State Highway Commission picked the route for Interstate 44 in early 1960 in a fashion similar to how they picked the Mark Twain Expressway, by consulting all the surveys of how many homes and businesses would be lost, the cost, and the length of each route, unanimously choosing the route that would displace the least

[17] "The Highway That's a Hot Potato," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 20, 1959.

[18] Association of Webster Groves Property Owners, Interstate 44 Route Proposal, Curtis Papers, WHMC-Columbia.

[19] "The Highway That's a Hot Potato," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 20, 1959.

[20] *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 13, 1960.

number of businesses but displace more families.[21] Many South Side residents and their aldermen were not pleased with the result. One alderman showed the rift between the people and the state engineers when he charged that the Highway Department had been "very dictatorial" about the route they wanted.[22]

The rhetoric born in the nineteenth century and fostered by the historical fragmentation of the St. Louis region and events such as the Mark Twain Expressway debate persists into the twenty-first century, in places planners could have only imagined in 1950. Fifty miles away, in the northernmost county within the St. Louis metropolitan area, rapidly increasing population and strong economic development in the relatively small community of Troy resulted in visions for road expansion. The plan for a new connector highway drew the ire of numerous homeowners whose property would be acquired by eminent domain for right-of-way.

In response, one local resident stated, reflecting the cool reception homeowners gave the proposal, "I am not against progress but against a highway plowing through homes and family heritage."[23] Without the Mark Twain Expressway and the others proposed in the Elliott Plan, that area on the fringes of exurbia might never have witnessed the levels of growth that encouraged such planning. But more importantly, this case emphasizes that tensions between localized interests and those advocating, for various reasons ranging from selfish to genuine, the greater good of the community are a St. Louis—and an American—tradition. It also highlights the power of just one word in

[21] Three articles found in Curtis Papers, Folder 6413: Undated (probably from 1960) and unknown source; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 13, 1960; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 10, 1959.

[22] *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, February 6, 1960.

[23] Bob Simmons, "Resident on East-West Corridor-"not in my backyard," *Lincoln County Journal*, August 7, 2007, 6a. Cheri Thornhill-Winchester quoted.

determining the course of that tradition, real or imagined. In this case and so many before it, progress is so deeply imbedded in our conceptions of a successful American society that denying it outright is nearly impossible.

As these debates over other highways in the St. Louis area show, the unique historical fragmentation of the region and the broader political consensus framed the debate. That history of tension between individual communities and the larger civic whole was expressed by citizens who fought expressways. By the 1950s, the nationwide drive for continued economic growth and the concurrent faith in expertise made expressways seem inevitable. The only option to save one's home was to move the route somewhere else. The opposition to the Mark Twain Expressway was thus a continuation of a longer historical process in St. Louis, and just the beginning of the expressway fight.

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