

21st Century Carondelet



**2009 Planning
Process Report**

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Introduction

The City of St. Louis has experienced the revolutionary demographic changes that have affected many American cities at a scale larger than almost any other. Since 1950, its population has declined by almost 500,000 – from over 830,000 to 348,000 at the turn of the 21st Century. The 2010 census should indicate that the rate of decrease has lessened considerably and we can expect the population to have reached between 335,000 and 345,000 people. In addition, the composition of the City has changed in regards to race, gender, age, and income. The economic character of the community has also changed, transitioning from significant industrial and manufacturing exports to office, service, visitor, and entertainment industries. This new economy is significantly tourism-based drawing visitors from throughout the region, state, and nation. The St. Louis region has dropped from being the 13th largest metropolitan area in the US to the 22nd largest and is now known as one of the slowest-growing regions in the country. Its position in the world economy is certainly less than it was in the years following World War II. These and other attributes of the City of St. Louis and surrounding region must be considered if a part of them is to undertake a process that is hoped to result in a Strategic Plan that will help it compete in the 21st Century. The historic Carondelet Areas and some of the surrounding neighborhoods are now embarking on that process.

In late 2008 the Carondelet Community Betterment Federation (CCBF) made the decision to re-establish and enhance the subsidiary Carondelet Housing Corporation (CHC) to assist in the strategic redefinition of the area. The CHC can help the CCBF move beyond its service functions and into development functions for its low- and moderate-income constituency with the construction and rehabilitation of buildings for that market. The CCBF board of directors strengthened the board of directors of the CHC, reallocated funds to it, and expanded staff functions to include satisfy administrative needs. In January 2009, the board of directors authorized the initiation of the process that would result in a strategic plan that would assist the CHC in fulfilling its mission for Carondelet in the 21st Century. The process for the plan included the following steps:

- a. The retention of the Office of T. Harkness and Associates to develop the plan with the assistance of the Saint Louis University Office for Community and Social Research and the Regional Housing and Community Development Alliance (RHCDCA).
- b. The establishment of a timeline for the planning process beginning with initiation in January 2009 and ending with completion in September 2009.
- c. The establishment of a Client Committee composed of representatives of various constituencies of Carondelet, the City of St. Louis, and the St. Louis region, including institutional, business, religious, health care, neighborhood, investor, City administrative and political, and regional and professional representatives. This committee would meet six times in different locations of the study area to review and provide input into the

- plan as well as two community meeting presentations that would be made to the community as a whole.
- d. The plan would be privately financed with funding coming from five corporations, institutions, and private interests. In this way, control of the plan was maintained by the CHC.
 - e. The finished materials for the strategic plan would be published as a printed document, an electronic document on computer compact disks (CDs), and on the internet and would also include a set of mounted maps to be utilized in the new Presentation and Development Room of the CHC.
 - f. The implementer of the Plan would be the CHC.
 - g. The study area would be approximately 90 blocks, with Morgan Ford Street on the West, the Mississippi River on the East, Delor Avenue on the North, and the City limits on the South.

The foci of the Plan were decided to be Land Use and Public Space. Carondelet has 18,000 fewer people than in 1950 with approximately 14,500 in 2008. Therefore, its business and residential density is very different and demand on the areas traffic circulation system, particularly with the construction of I-55 in the mid-1950s, is now very different. In addition, withdrawal from or downsizing of key community elements such as parishes and schools, public schools, as well as the relocation or termination of key businesses due to flooding provided the need to address land use in general for different purposes and to increase the use and quality of public space. With public and private investment reinitiated, the questions of land use, timing, and location with multiple participants required a defined and agreed-upon strategic plan that had value consistency, and quality for the diverse and historic study area as it participates in the 21st Century. The attributes of the Plan are:

- a. The plan must have thoughts and ideas that generate an energy and competitiveness that attracts additional public and private investors as it moves through the 21st Century.
- b. There must be a discipline, realism, and cost-effectiveness to the ideas, goals, and visions outlined in the Plan.
- c. The Plan must have long-term values because it will take many years to be implemented. It should involve cumulative actions over that time by many different investors and public and private decision makers.
- d. The planning area is very large and so the actions that occur in one section of the area must also benefit and influence the growth and quality of life in another section of the area.
- e. The region, City, and Carondelet are slow-growth areas with certain risks and limited resources and therefore mistakes in land use and public space decisions must not occur or be kept to a minimum by the multiple diverse, changing participants in the decision-making framework.

- f. The timing of the Strategic Plan is important in that certain projects have occurred and that public and private investors are active in many different ventures, allowing for a maturity of physical change that must exist if a strategic plan has the level of project depth that provides a basis for its existence. The Plan's existence will strengthen what has already happened and will increase the value for the projects and public space activities that are to occur.

The existence of the Client Committee, the multiple locations of the Community and Client meeting process to review and influence the Plan, and the ideas and data that are derived from the process will assist the CHC in making fewer mistakes, to be more effective in obtaining more opportunities, to take actions that are more timely and competitive, and to create a **21st Century Carondelet** that is quality and meaningful for a diverse constituency. To accomplish that goal and have those capabilities, it must have a strategic plan that provides a framework that allows it to compete at any time for any opportunity on a realistic basis. If the plan and CHC perform at the highest quality, they have the opportunity to create an environment that is no longer changing in a negative way but on a basis that is positive, different, smaller, competitive, and meaningful for all homeowners, investors, businesses, governments, and tenants; old or young, child or adult, active or inactive. The historic Carondelet area will once again be one of the special places in St. Louis.