

Equity Planning in a Fragmented Suburban Setting: The Case of St. Louis

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Equity planning emerged out of the urban turmoil and community organizing of the 1960s and 1970s. Between 1964 and 1968, cities exploded with civil unrest. Appointed by President Johnson to look into the causes of the riots, the Kerner Commission pointed to deplorable conditions in the black ghetto, and famously proclaimed: “White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it” (Kerner Commission 1968, p. 2). White flight from central cities to the suburbs, the Kerner Commission argued, was a principal cause of urban ghettos: “[C]entral cities are becoming more heavily Negro while the suburban fringes around them remain almost entirely white” (Kerner Commission, p. 13).

In 1969, one year after the Kerner Commission issued its report, Carl Stokes became the first African American mayor of an American city over 100,000 population.¹ He appointed a relative unknown, Norm Krumholz, as Director of City Planning. Gathering around him a talented coterie of progressive planners, Krumholz developed the principles of what has come to be known as equity planning. The unspoken premise of equity planning is that city governments and planning commissions can take meaningful action to improve the lives of the urban poor and disadvantaged minorities.

Recent turmoil in the small suburb of Ferguson, Missouri, following the shooting of Michael Brown on August 9, 2014, is a clear sign that the geography of disadvantage has shifted

to the suburbs. While cities still contain a disproportionate share of poor and minorities, almost all central cities are experiencing an influx of young, educated professionals who are lifting up neighborhoods with substantial urban amenities. Increasingly, poor people, people of color, and immigrants are settling in suburbs, not central cities. Instead of one city government and school district, they face a fragmented institutional landscape of smaller (and often weaker) municipalities and school districts. Many live in unincorporated parts of metropolitan areas, where planning and land use authority is in the hands of a distant county government. The built environment in suburbs is different from central cities and the challenges that marginalized populations face are also different. The practice of equity planning must adapt to the new landscape of suburban poverty.

I propose to accomplish three tasks in this chapter: 1) Synthesize the literature on the growth of low-income and minority populations in suburbs; 2) Identify the different challenges facing equity planners in suburbs versus central cities; 3) Draw lessons for equity planners from a case study of equity planning in the inner-ring suburbs of St. Louis. In many ways, the challenges of poverty and social exclusion are greater in suburbs than in central cities. In addition to redistributing resources, the new suburban environment requires equity planners to invent new institutional and civic structures for delivering those resources to those who need them the most.

The Shifting Geography of Disadvantage

Having fixed the boundaries of the City of St. Louis in 1875, St. Louis metropolitan area is an extreme case of suburbanization. According to 2014 population estimates, St. Louis City

contains only 11.3 percent of metropolitan area population, ranking it 43rd out of the 50 largest metros on this dimension. St. Louis is also one of the most institutionally fragmented in the nation, ranking 3rd in both the number of local governments and the number of school districts per 100,000 population (East-West Gateway Council of Governments, 2015, p. 113). The research is clear: other things being equal, the greater the fragmentation across municipalities and school districts, the higher the level of racial and economic segregation (Weiher 1991; Heikil 1996; Bischoff 2008; Rothwell and Massey 2010). If it is true that you can understand a phenomenon best by examining its most extreme manifestation, then examining the St. Louis case should to shed light on the special challenges of suburban poverty.

During the founding period of equity planning, suburban poverty was rare and equity planners focused almost exclusively on central cities. After reviewing the 1970 census, Krumholz and his staff noted that 98 percent of the suburban growth in the 1960s was white; blacks represented only 4.5 percent of the suburban population (Krumholz and Forester, 1990, p. 17). Reflecting on this reality, in 1970, Nixon's Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), George Romney, described suburbs as a "high-income white noose" around the black inner city.²

After 1970, however, black suburbanization accelerated rapidly. By 1990, 37 percent of the black population of the largest metros lived in the suburbs; by 2010 a majority of African Americans (51 percent) lived in suburbs (Johnson, 2014; citing Frey, 2001 and Orfield and Luce, 2012).³ With race and class tightly connected, the suburbanization of poverty has followed closely on the heels of black suburbanization. Between 2000 and 2010 the poor population in

the suburbs of largest metros increased by over half (53 percent), more than doubling the rate of increase in central cities (23 percent). By 2010, 55 percent of the poor population in the largest 100 metros lived in suburbs (Kneebone and Berube 2013, pp. 17-18). Not only are more poor people living in suburbs, they also are increasingly living in areas of concentrated poverty. Although concentrated poverty is more prevalent in cities than in suburbs, it is increasing rapidly in the suburbs. According to the American Community Survey, by 2006-2010, 29 percent of the suburban poor lived in areas with poverty rates exceeding 20 percent (Kneebone and Berube 2013, p. 31).

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE: PERSONS IN POVERTY BY DECADE, 1960-2010

St. Louis is on the leading edge of these trends. Compared to other metropolitan areas, more poor and minority households live outside the central city in the St. Louis metropolitan. According to the 2010 census, only 30 percent of those in the metro area who identify as “black only” live in the City of St. Louis. As Figure 1 shows, many more poor people now live in suburban St. Louis County than in the City of St. Louis. (The City of St. Louis is its own separate county.) Bernadette Hanlon reports that in 2000 “[a]lmost half the Midwest’s high-poverty inner-ring suburbs were located in St. Louis” (Hanlon 2012, p. 75).

Older, inner ring suburbs are not uniformly poor. The suburbanization of black and poor households in St. Louis has followed Homer Hoyt’s sectoral model of neighborhood change. According to Hoyt, households do not move out in uniform concentric circles as originally hypothesized by the Chicago School of Human Ecology, but different economic groups migrated outward in distinct pie slices along transportation corridors: once established in one sector,

high-rent (and low rent) neighborhoods “tend to move out in that sector to the periphery of the city” (Hoyt, 1939, p. 119).

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE: High-Poverty Areas St. Louis City and County, 2000 and
2010

Figure 2 shows the spread of concentrated poverty from St. Louis City into suburban St. Louis County. Concentrated poverty is spreading northwest out of the City of St. Louis into the suburbs in St. Louis County that were built under the pressure of the housing shortage after World War II up to about 1965. Post-war suburbs tend to have modest homes with homogeneous architecture and often few commercial areas. By contrast, pre-war suburbs directly west of the City of St. Louis, such as Clayton and Kirkwood, tend to have larger homes with more distinctive architecture, as well as pedestrian-friendly retail centers.

Historically, black households migrated north and west out of the urban core. Black suburbs are basically an extension of the segregated black communities in North St. Louis City. The historical pattern of segregation was enforced by “a tangle of private practices and public policies” that largely restricted black families to neighborhoods north of the infamous “Delmar divide” in St. Louis (Gordon, 2008, p. 83; see also Rothstein, 2014).⁴ With the passage of the civil rights laws of the 1960s, public policies enforcing segregation, such as racist patterns of federal mortgage insurance and the enforcement of restrictive covenants, ended. Today, racial segregation is largely upheld by the inability of African American families to afford homes in more privileged parts of the region, which are walled off from the poor by high prices,

exclusionary zoning laws, as well as continued racial steering. Economic segregation, which is legal, reinforces patterns of racial segregation.

The Challenge of Suburban Poverty

Poverty presents similar challenges for families, whether they live in a city or a suburb. The built environment of suburbs, however, presents additional problems because it drives up the costs of transportation. Moreover, in both the public and nonprofit sectors institutions are generally weaker in suburbs than in central cities. The redistributive agenda of equity planning is more difficult to achieve when institutional boundaries are superimposed on historical patterns of economic and racial segregation.

Today's poor and racially segregated suburbs did not start out that way. After World War II, developers rushed to satisfy the pent-up housing demand, mass-producing smaller homes (800 to 1,000 square feet) in tract housing using a few standard floor plans. To keep costs down, these homes usually had little ornamentation or distinctive designs. Typically they were one-story bungalows, with a "picture" window marking the placement of the living room and a kitchen in back overlooking a small yard. Often a separate garage was connected to the house by a breezeway. Aided by FHA and VA loan guarantees, the white working class flocked to new post-war suburbs. Market demand for these modest suburban homes remained strong for decades.

As white working class families moved into the middle class, however, they yearned for larger homes with more modern amenities, such as two or more bathrooms, nine-foot ceilings,

family rooms, central air conditioning, and attached garages. Developers turned to building larger homes for the middle and upper classes in the exurbs, increasing economic segregation across suburbs (Jargowsky, 2002; Dwyer 2007). According to the Census Bureau, in 2014 the median size of a new single-family home built was 2,506 feet.⁵ Exurbanization is to older suburbs what suburbanization was to central cities: it siphons off housing demand, leaving behind more obsolete housing for households further down the economic ladder. The problem has not just been that more affluent families were moving out to distant suburbs but that housing production has far outstripped housing demand decade after decade – especially in weak market metros like St. Louis. Metropolitan areas in the bottom third of job and population growth between 1990 and 2000, built new housing at a rate six times the growth of population (Watson, 2007). In the 1990s, St. Louis built 1.7 units of new housing for every new household in the region (Bier and Post 2006, p. 179). Housing overproduction leads inexorably to housing vacancy and abandonment in central cities and inner-ring suburbs.

The de facto affordable housing policy in the United States is to subsidize the construction of new housing for affluent families who then leave behind their old homes for those on the next rung down the economic ladder, with housing eventually filtering down to the poor. As the housing filtering chain has lengthened, increasingly, those at the bottom are moving into suburban housing. The shift to the suburbs is based on two factors: 1) large parts of inner cities are characterized by concentrated poverty, abandoned housing, and high crime; 2) some low-income and minority households are being pushed out to the suburbs by gentrification pressures. The push of urban blight is much more powerful than gentrification pressures, especially in older industrial cities like St. Louis (Mallach 2015; Swanstrom and

Webber 2014). Essentially, the relatively affordable homes in post-World War II suburbs have become the housing of last resort for low-income and minority households. According to Zillow, for example, the median price of a home in Ferguson, an inner-ring suburb of St. Louis, where the shooting of Michael Brown occurred, was \$63,600 in September 2015.⁶ Using the rough rule of thumb that families should be able to afford a home priced at 2.5 times their annual income, the median home in Ferguson would be affordable to households earning about \$25,440 a year. Although these modest suburban homes are affordable, their stagnating or declining values provide little opportunity for families to accumulate home equity. By contrast, primarily white upper and middle class households can afford to buy homes in more privileged suburbs with appreciating home values.

Attracted by the suburban lifestyle, poor and working class families have flocked to the suburbs, but in many ways the suburban lifestyle is a cruel hoax for them. The suburban lifestyle works well for middle- and upper-class families, who can afford the multiple automobiles required in low-density suburbs characterized by widely separated land uses. The initial price of a home in an inner-ring suburb may be quite affordable, but this affordability ignores the operating costs of a home. The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) has developed a Housing+Transportation Index. According to the conventional standard, housing is considered affordable if consumes no more than 30 percent of income. CNT estimates that a reasonable standard for transportation affordability is 15 percent of income, so that the affordability standard for Housing+Transportation is 45 percent of household income. For the typical household in the St. Louis region, transportation costs are 23 percent of income, almost as high as housing costs, which are 28 percent of income. Transportation costs are generally

lower in denser central cities that are generally better served by public transit. Many suburban locations, which are “affordable” for the typical household when only housing costs are counted, become “unaffordable” when transportation costs are included.⁷ Long commuting times undermine the ability of poor families to get ahead economically. A large study of upward mobility in counties across the country found that average commute time is one of the strongest factors affecting the odds of escaping poverty (Chetty and Hendren 2015).

With the important exception of schools, which are usually generously supported by suburban taxpayers, suburbs invest fewer dollars in public goods and services than central cities. This works well for middle class and affluent households. The suburban lifestyle is a largely private lifestyle, centered on the home. Homes on larger lots with swimming pools, basketball hoops, and swing sets do not need as many public parks, pools, and recreation centers. Suburban governments were often incorporated not to provide public services but to control land use, keeping out poor and minorities, by zoning out multi-family housing and requiring large lots for single-family homes.⁸ In many suburbs land is zoned primarily for single-family homes with little provision for mixing in retail and commercial functions. As long as the area is thoroughly middle class or affluent, citizens feel little need for expensive public goods and services. Residents of affluent suburbs can get most of what they want on the private market, accessing dispersed locations via the automobile.

As the residents of suburbs become poorer, however, the need arises for a more active public sector that is able to provide services for families who cannot afford to purchase them for themselves on the private market. Disadvantaged suburbs suffer from a double whammy:

the tax base of the community erodes at the same time that the need for greater municipal revenue increases. Once suburban municipalities became predominantly low income, the depleted tax base becomes inadequate for even minimal services, let alone for the more robust public services needed by low-income households. As we noted earlier, suburban fragmentation increases economic segregation. A study of over 5,000 suburbs found that between 1980 and 2000 the percentage of suburban residents living in poor suburbs more than doubled (Swanstrom, et al, 2006).⁹ According to Myron Orfield, about half of the suburban population lives in “at-risk” suburbs with high needs and low, often declining, tax bases (Orfield, 2002, p. 33).

Instead of supporting social equity, many fiscally stressed suburban governments exploit poor people and pull them further down into poverty. In an effort to raise badly needed revenues, for example, many suburban governments in St. Louis have turned to traffic fines and court fees to finance local government with disastrous consequences for low-income residents of the area (Balko 2014; Arch City Defenders 2014; U. S. Department of Justice 2015). One inner-ring suburb of St. Louis, Pine Lawn, raised 63 percent of its general fund revenue in 2014 from traffic fines and court fees. Pine Lawn is extreme but many fiscally stressed suburbs in North St. Louis engage in the same exploitative practices, including Ferguson (Barker, 2015).¹⁰ With low pay and inadequate training, white police officers often target blacks, especially young African American men. Many low-income defendants, who cannot afford the fines, fail to appear in court. The court then issues a warrant for their arrest. In 2013 Pine Lawn, with a population of only 3,275, had 23,457 outstanding arrest warrants (Ferguson Commission 2015, p. 91). If motorists with outstanding arrest warrants are stopped again, the fines escalate. If

they cannot pay, they are put in jail. As one report put it: “defendants are incarcerated for their poverty” (Arch City Defenders, 2014). Having lost their driver’s license or their freedom, many end up losing their jobs, making it even less likely that they will be able to pay their fines. The system is frequently compared to debtors’ prisons. The systematic exploitation of low income, mainly minority residents of North County suburbs is a major reason why the demonstrations in Ferguson, were so vehement and long-lasting.

In *Crabgrass Frontier* Kenneth Jackson summed up the American suburban experience in a memorable sentence: “affluent and middle-class Americans live in suburban areas that are from their workplaces, in homes that they own, and in the center of yards that by urban standards elsewhere are enormous” (Jackson, 1985, p. 6). We could sum up recent trends in the suburbanization of poverty using similar language: “increasingly, poor Americans live in suburban areas that are far from their workplaces, in homes the own or rent, and in the center of yards that are by the standards of the urban poor enormous.” We could also add that they are serviced by local public institutions that are, by the standards of the urban poor, exceedingly small, under-resourced, and lacking in professionalism.

The Challenge for Equity Planners

The condition of municipal government is crucial for equity planning. The literature is clear about who equity planners are: “[Equity planning] ... refers to persons working in official capacities for city governments” (Krumholz and Clavel, 1994, p. 1). Krumholz and his band of city planners strove to move the resources of city government away from the downtown growth machine toward the community organizations that were springing up in poor and

minority neighborhoods in the 1970s. “[E]quity planning developed as a government response to community organizing” (Krumholz and Clavel, 1994, pp. 1 and 11).

Moving public resources toward grassroots organizations in poor neighborhoods was not easy because the elected officials and the City Planning Commission set policy, not the planners. Equity planners became skilled, however, at exploiting “institutional openings” in city government (Krumholz and Forester, 1990, p. 211). Government did not operate in a strictly hierarchical fashion; by establishing informal relationships and using their planning skills and control over information equity planners found that they could influence city policies and planning practices. They fed crucial information and policy ideas to grassroots organizations -- but they often had to do this surreptitiously in order to maintain an image of neutrality in case they were challenged by elected leaders. Equity planners deviated from the usual role of planners as technicians of means in order to actively pursue the end of greater equity. They justified usurping the power of democratically elected officials in favor of their equity agenda on the ground that “the existing democratic institutions are biased against the interests of those at the bottom of the social system” (Krumholz and Clavel, 1994, p. 3).

How does equity planners operate in the suburbs, however, when municipal governments lack both the resources to plan and the high capacity grassroots organizations to feed those resources to? Compared to the 1970s community organizing is down across the nation. However, past community organizing and federal programs like the War on Poverty helped to lay down a rich array of nonprofits in central cities that are generally lacking in the suburbs. Relative to cities, poor suburbs have the added disadvantage of low “political-

organizational endowments,” encompassing such factors as “the fiscal capacity of political jurisdictions, the presence of public services such as clinics and hospitals, and the array and capacity of nonprofit organizations, which deliver many key social-welfare services” (Weir, 2011, p. 244).¹¹ A 2011 study found that “suburban community foundations in the four regions studied are newer and smaller than those in core cities, despite faster growth of suburban poor populations” (Reckhow & Weir 2011, p. 1). Community development corporations (CDCs), nonprofit organizations devoted to revitalizing specific neighborhoods, are concentrated in cities. An association of CDCs in St. Louis, for example, has seventeen members operating in the City of St. Louis but only six in suburban St. Louis County – even though many more poor people live in the suburbs.¹²

In short, poor families have flocked to suburbs in search of a better quality of life. In many cases they ended up in communities with lower crime, and higher performing schools. But as suburban poverty has become concentrated, these advantages have eroded. Moreover, the suburban poor face additional challenges created by low-density development with separated land uses. In attempting to address suburban poverty, equity planners face two daunting challenges of their own: 1) the local public sector is fragmented, under-resourced and lacking in professionalism; and 2) grassroots civic organizations are often absent or, when present, lacking in organizational capacity. The case of 24:1 shows how equity planners are beginning to confront these challenges in new and creative ways.

Transit-Oriented Development in the Suburbs: The Case of 24:1

Located in the North suburbs of St. Louis County just over the city line (Figure 3), the Normandy School District (NSD) is highly fragmented, poor, and overwhelmingly African American. In 2010 it had a 2010 population of 35,210, 82.2 percent African American. In 2013, the child poverty rate was 37.6 percent; in every school in the district over 96 percent of the children are eligible for free and reduced lunch.¹³ Crisscrossed by 24 municipalities, with an average population of only 1,834, local governments in the NSD footprint are unable to achieve basic economies of scale or access professional expertise by developing a division of labor. Generally lacking the institutional capacity to implement much beyond basic housekeeping services, most would fit in Myron Orfield's typology as "at-risk, segregated suburbs", with low tax capacity, high poverty, and high concentrations of minorities (Orfield, 2002). Civil society is also relatively underdeveloped. A survey of local organizations conducted by 24:1 staff in 2010 found only four neighborhood organizations in the NSD footprint, including one neighborhood group, a community gardening group, and an anti-crime block group (24:1, 2011).

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE: Map of Normandy School District

The population of the NSD footprint is declining and the housing market is weak; some areas are beginning to suffer from vacancy and abandonment. In order to address the disinvestment and rising poverty in the area, which is driving the fiscal stress and police misconduct discussed earlier, the area needs strategic planning for economic and community development. Remarkably, *not a single one of the 24 governments in NSD has a fulltime planner on staff.*¹⁴ If equity planners are, by definition, planners who work for city

governments, then there are no equity planners in large swaths of suburbia. If equity planning is going to emerge in fragmented suburban contexts, it must come from outside government.

Equity planning in NSD has been led by Beyond Housing, a high-capacity, regional nonprofit that has guided a place-based initiative in NSD since 2010. Called 24:1 (“24 Communities, 1 Vision”), it is one of the most sophisticated comprehensive community initiatives in the nation, recognized by both the White House and HUD (White House, 2011; U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2012). The idea for 24:1 emerged out of a series of meetings of municipalities in 2009 to address the foreclosure crisis; a multimillion-dollar gift from an anonymous donor gave Beyond Housing the resources to staff the initiative (Beyond Housing, 2011).¹⁵ Beyond Housing led a robust participatory planning process, including over 52 meetings, attended by over 500 people, to gather information and decide on a strategic direction. In addition to area residents, participants included Normandy School District leaders and staff, elected leadership from area municipalities, representatives of social service agencies, and staff and faculty from the University of Missouri St. Louis (Public Policy Research Center, 2011).

Released in April 2011, the plan includes 40 specific strategies in eleven impact areas (Beyond Housing, 2011). Unfortunately, in 2012 NSD lost state accreditation. As a result, students could transfer to any public school in the area and NSD had to pay the tuition dollars as determined by the receiving district – over \$20,000 per student in some cases. This brought NSD to the brink of bankruptcy. In order to keep NSD solvent Beyond Housing stepped in and bought seven vacant schools for \$2.9 million. Since then, the number of transfers has been

and some school districts have agreed to limit the tuition charged. While it still faces fiscal stress, NSD is no longer on the brink of bankruptcy.

Despite working in a beleaguered school district, Beyond Housing has been able to make significant progress on its plan. It now owns 422 rental units, most scattered-site single-family suburban homes, that provide quality housing for families at affordable prices. Working with 25 not-for-profit partners Beyond Housing has created a pre-K program that has driven the infant mortality rate down 20 and 30 percent in the two area zip codes. Every child who enters kindergarten in the Normandy School District receives a \$500 college savings account. Beyond Housing developed the first full-service grocery store and full-service bank, both of which had been missing in the community for over half a century. Recently, it opened a 4-screen movie theater and 12,000 square-foot community services building that will house a primary health care provider. All new development is owned by a Community Land Trust to insure that the equity will remain in the community and under the control of the community.¹⁶

One of the issues that emerged out of the 24:1 planning process was resident dissatisfaction with the light rail station at St. Charles Rock Road in Pagedale. One of 37 stations on the light rail system in St. Louis known as MetroLink, the station has an uninviting 191-space asphalt parking lot that gets incredibly hot in the summer. The area is not friendly to pedestrians. Surrounding land uses, which take little advantage of proximity to the regional rails system, include a flea market, junk yard, light industry, warehouses, along with considerable vacant land. Beyond Housing decided to look into the possibility of doing transit-oriented development (TOD) at the site. TOD can be defined as development within $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$

mile of a transit station that mixes residential, retail, office, open space, and public uses to maximize the ability of residents and employees to travel by transit, foot, bicycle, and car.

INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE: Living Wage Jobs within Half Mile of a Transit Station

It soon became clear that TOD could have substantial benefits for residents of 24:1. If it enabled residents to reduce car usage, it could be an effective anti-poverty strategy. In 2015, the annual average cost of owning and operating a vehicle was \$8,698 (American Automobile Association 2015). According to a study of Minneapolis-St. Paul, moving from a transit-poor to a transit-rich neighborhood would save the average household \$5,940 a year (Center for Transit-Oriented Development and Center for Neighborhood Technology 2006).¹⁷ TOD at the St. Charles Rock Road Station could provide people with convenient and less expensive access to jobs. Research showed that there were 46,155 mid-level jobs within ½ mile of a transit station in St. Louis City and County (Figure 4). These are the kind of living wage jobs that residents of the area would qualify for. Living in a transit-rich and more pedestrian-friendly environment can also promote healthier lifestyles, reducing obesity and cardiovascular disease (Sallis et al 2012; MacDonald 2010).

The challenge for Beyond Housing is that TOD is rare in weak market settings, like the 24:1 area (Hess and Lombardi 2004).¹⁸ Beyond Housing decided to fund a market and feasibility study.¹⁹ The study confirmed that the area had a very weak real estate market. According to Zillow, the median home value in the area was \$73,600; no home sells for more than \$120,000 (Development Strategies n.d.). With the cost of constructing a new home being at least \$150,000, clearly no new homes will be constructed without subsidies. Nevertheless, the

feasibility study concluded that there was a market for quality affordable housing around the transit station. The market was not young urban professionals that are the key demographic for most TOD projects. Instead, the project would mostly be attractive to working families in North County and singles or couples with more modest incomes. The project would need to be 70-75 percent affordable housing versus 20-25 percent market rate. Deep subsidies would be needed to make the project work financially. With 12,000-18,000 trips per day along St. Charles Rock Road and 43,400 boardings at the station a month, the development could support 20,000 to 30,000 square feet of retail.²⁰ Even though TOD at St. Charles Rock Road was “fraught with challenges,” including environmental contamination, the feasibility study concluded that “the opportunity to create a mix of affordable and market rate housing in a walkable community is great” (Development Strategies n.d., p. 2).

In the fall of 2012 Beyond Housing decided to ask local residents and businesses what kind of development they wanted to see around the station.²¹ A literature search determined that there was no good model of a participatory design process for planning TOD. Beyond Housing implemented its own planning process which included a Steering Committee, composed of residents, local elected officials, experts, and other regional stakeholders, as well as a Technical Team made up of planners and representatives of all that agencies that had a stake in the project. Recognizing that low-income residents and renters tend to be underrepresented in community planning processes (Silverman, Taylor and Crawford 2008; Day 1997; David 2002), Beyond Housing devised a range of different methods to insure that all voices in the community would be heard. It conducted three public meetings in which 320 resident and nonresident stakeholders expressed their preferences, using keypad polling, small

group discussions, and mapping exercises. Street Teams were hired from the community to distribute information (1,415 flyers and door hangers) and conduct a baseline survey of attitudes toward development around the station. Beyond Housing also erected a billboard calling for input and put up a website and call/text line for feedback. Beyond Housing even hired a local artist who installed large wooden boxes near the MetroLink station with slots where passersby could deposit suggestions, which were then wood-burned into the surface of the box. In total, over 4,000 responses and ideas were received from residents and other stakeholders. In 2014, Beyond Housing won the award for the Best Civic Engagement Process from the Missouri Chapter of the American Planning Association.

The equity planners and staff of Beyond Housing were taken aback when results the baseline survey of 97 residents and rides of MetroLink suggested deep opposition to the very principles of TOD. Only 7 percent of respondents wanted new housing at the site; 18 percent were opposed to any new housing. At the first community meeting 31 percent expressed opposition to new housing and if housing were to be built a majority (51 percent) preferred suburban-style single-family homes. Participants said the drawings presented by Beyond Housing of multi-family housing looked like “the ghetto.”

INSERT FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE: Subsidy Required for Different Types of Housing

The planners went back to the drawing board. At the next public meeting they presented information on the level of subsidy that would be necessary for different types of housing, explaining that single-family homes would require much more subsidy per unit in order to be marketable (Figure 5). They explained that denser forms of housing would require less subsidy and by locating more housing within walking distance of the station, they would

increase the likelihood of retail development. The residents got it. In a survey at the end of the planning process 76 percent reported that they viewed multi-family housing under four stories more favorably now. The same percentage reported that the meetings increased their support for TOD around the St. Charles Rock Road Station.

Not only did the community change its views of TOD but the planners changed their plans, as well. As a result of the pushback from the community, they lessened the density on the site. The final plan calls for single-family housing in the form of townhouses to be phased in further from the station. TOD cannot look the same in a suburb as in a dense central city. With local zoning codes prohibiting any buildings over 35 feet in height, it should not be surprising that residents viewed taller buildings as jarring and out of place. In response to community input, the community the planners also added a banquet center, public bathrooms near the station, and more shade trees.

Since the planning process was completed in July 2013 Beyond Housing has been working to make it a reality. One barrier that needed to be surmounted was the zoning code that banned the kind of mixed-use development envisioned for the area around the station. In 2014 the City of Pagedale Board of Alderpersons approved a Transit Oriented Development Form-Based Code District.²² Instead of dictating particular land uses, such as housing or retail, form-based codes direct a physical form that permits different uses to mix in the same space. Once Beyond Housing takes possession of the land, it can petition for it to be placed under the new form-based code. Aided by an anonymous donor, Beyond Housing has begun purchasing land around the transit station and it is pursuing the grants and tax credits necessary to make the project a reality.

Conclusion: The Future of Equity Planning in the Suburbs

More poor people now live in suburbs than in central cities. Equity planners need to adjust their strategies and tactics to the new suburban terrain. The suburban model of spread out single-family homes, strict separation of land uses, almost total reliance on the automobile, and smaller local governments is not well suited to the needs of poor people. Equity planners must learn how to weave vibrant nodes of urbanism into the frayed fabric of older suburbs. Action needs to be taken now to improve the lives of the suburban poor. We should not operate under the illusion, however, that substantial progress can be made at the local level without stronger suburban institutions and more supportive policies at the regional, state, and federal levels.

The case of 24:1 shows what can be accomplished when a high-capacity community organization works closely with residents of disadvantaged suburbs to improve their lives. The progress did not occur over night. Chris Krehmeyer, the charismatic President and CEO of Beyond Housing, is fond of saying: “community building happens at the speed of trust.”²³ Beyond Housing has earned the trust of the 24:1 communities by working in the area for over sixteen years and demonstrating over and over again that they are listening to the community. TOD has the potential to link low-opportunity suburbs to regional job clusters, increase disposable income by reducing household transportation costs, and bring economic development and a sense of place to disadvantaged suburbs. TOD is not easy in weak market suburban settings nor is it well-understood by suburban residents. Equity planners need to listen to suburban residents and adjust their plans to their preferences for smaller scale development – balancing the need for walkable communities with the continued importance of

the automobile. If done well, civic engagement can win acceptance for weaving urban vitality into weak market suburbs.

The case of 24:1 also shows the limits of suburban equity planning led by the nonprofit sector, not government. First, the success of 24:1 is difficult to scale up because it requires a high-capacity nonprofit.²⁴ Beyond Housing is the highest capacity community-based nonprofit in the St. Louis region and it could never have done what it did without the beneficence of an anonymous funder that has provided millions of dollars in flexible funding for 24:1. High quality community-based planning is expensive. The feasibility study and civic engagement process, for example, received \$65,000 of external funding. The final cost would need to include hundreds of hours of staff time not covered by outside grants. Few community-based nonprofits have the resources to invest in a long planning process before even a shovel is put in the ground. And even if other community-based organizations in the St. Louis area had these kinds of internal resources, there would not be enough public funds available for the necessary gap financing to make many projects like the St. Charles Rock Road TOD a reality. Because of its track record and high capacity Beyond Housing has been able to absorb a disproportionate amount of public funding. There simply is not nearly enough public funding available for every poor inner-ring urban and suburban community to do what 24:1 has done.

Another obstacle is the fragmentation of the local public sector which raises the costs of collective action to prohibitive levels. Beyond Housing has created a Municipal Government Partnership (MGP) to help small municipalities in 24:1 achieve economies of scale and greater professionalism. By organizing bulk purchase of rock salt and common paving contracts, for

example, municipalities have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars. MGP has now moved on to the tougher and more important challenge of coordinating economic and community development efforts across municipalities. By pooling Community Development Block Grant funds municipalities have improved efficiency and impact of federal funds. But all of these collaborations require an extraordinary amount of staff time and trust building. There are 144 local elected officials in the 24:1 area who need to be committed to the partnerships (Swanstrom, et al 2012, p. 7). Collaboration is built on trust that takes time to build. Anytime new officials are elected to office, trust needs to be rebuilt or the collaboration could collapse.

Ways need to be found to formalize or institutionalize collaborations in fragmented suburbs. In Chicago, South Cook County and West Cook County have formed collaboratives representing 29 municipalities that addressed the foreclosure crisis and have put together plans for TOD. In St. Louis, municipalities in the 24:1 area have created a police cooperative that could improve police professionalism. In 2015, St. Louis County passed a law requiring the 57 municipal police departments to meet minimal standards and achieve accreditation. This may put pressure on municipalities to contract out their police functions to the County or other municipalities that have been accredited. Ultimately, merger of small suburban municipalities would make sense but municipal mergers are very rare in the United States.

Finally, poor suburbs need more supportive policies at the regional, state, and federal levels. Like many metropolitan areas, the St. Louis region has overproduced housing on the suburban fringe, leading to housing vacancy in the urban core and now in inner-ring suburbs (Bier and Post 2003). Poor suburbs occupy a kind of blind spot in federal policy. For example,

even though there are more poor people in suburban St. Louis County, the County's CDBG allocation is less than a third of the City's. First-tier suburbs need to form coalitions to lobby state and federal governments for more supportive policies. The Northeast Ohio First Suburbs Consortium encompassing fifteen inner-ring suburbs describes itself on its website as "a government-led advocacy organization working to revitalize inner ring communities, and raise political awareness of the problems and inequities associated with urban sprawl and disinvestment." First-tier suburbs and central cities are both victims of policies that tilt the playing field against older parts of metropolitan areas. For years Myron Orfield has been calling for an alliance of central cities and inner-ring suburbs to address metropolitan inequities (Orfield 1997). The Met Council in the Twin Cities, which has addressed metropolitan inequities, is partly a result of that alliance.

Finally, first-tier suburbs need stronger community organizations. Equity planners have always struggled with how to balance cooperation and conflict – working together with stakeholders to implement solutions while simultaneously putting pressure on the powers that be to expand resources for poor communities and change the rules of the game. Equity planners employed by city governments often worked behind the scenes to help community organizations push for more progressive urban policies. Equity planners working for nonprofits in the suburbs will need to do the same – not just to empower existing organizations but to seed new ones. What disadvantaged suburbs need most are stronger organizations for community empowerment.

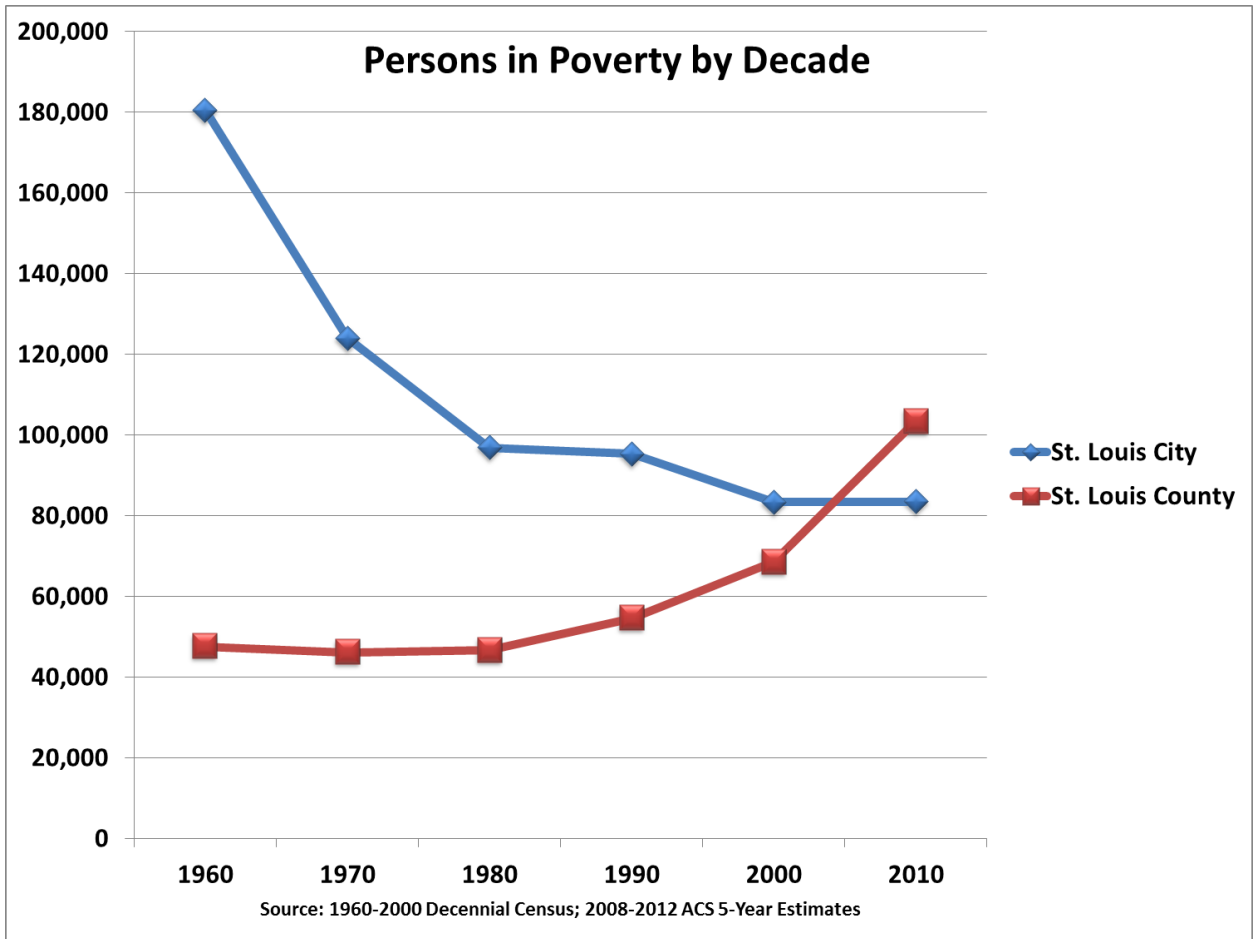


Figure 1. Persons in Poverty by Decade, 1960-2010

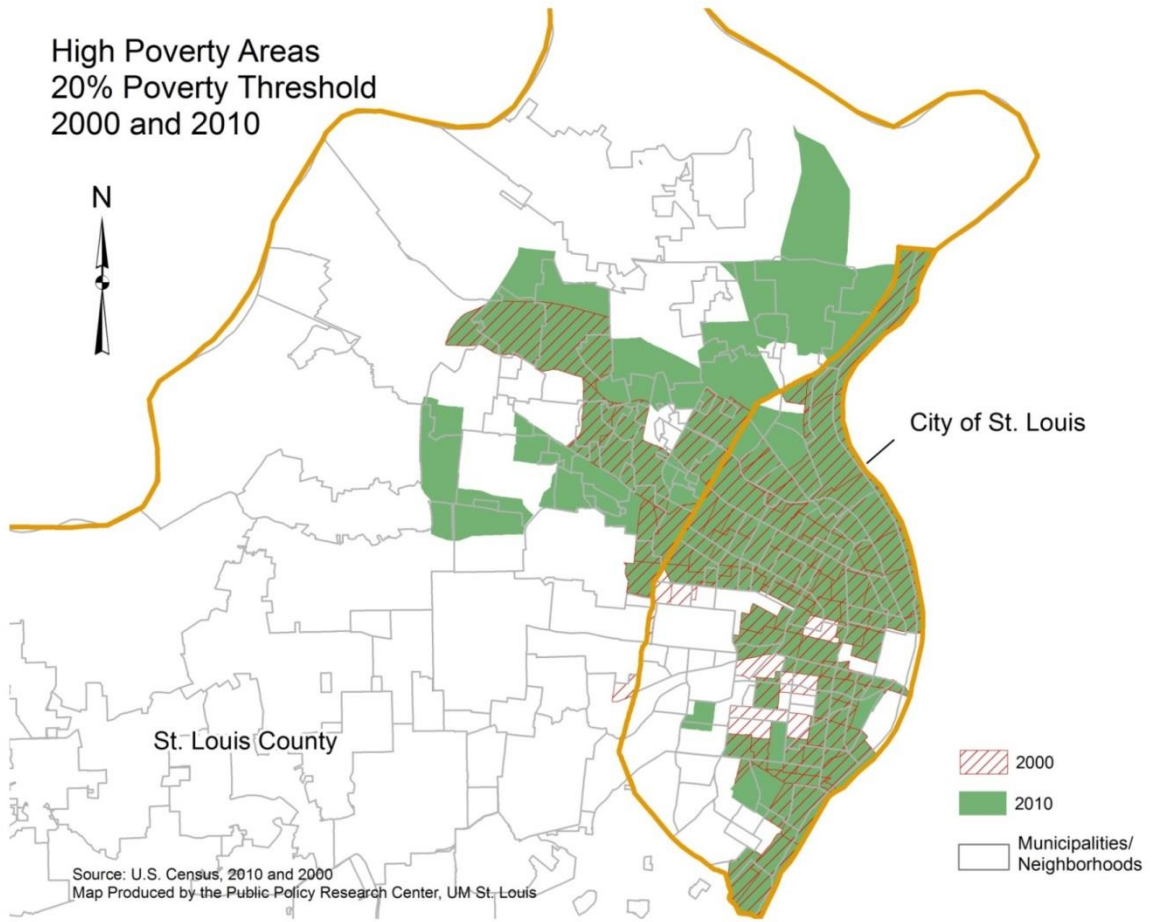


Figure 2. High-Poverty Areas St. Louis City and County, 2000 and 2010

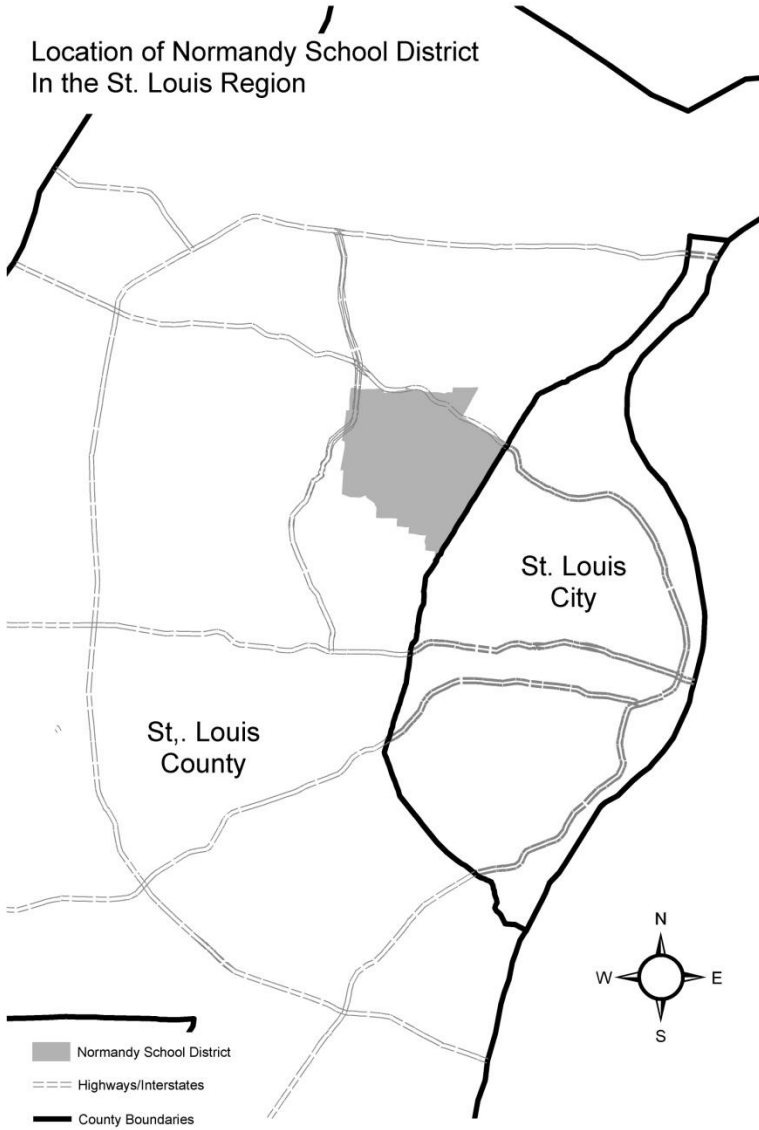


Figure 3: Map of Normandy School District



**Number of Jobs in Transit Zones by Monthly Wage
St. Louis City and St. Louis County**

Monthly Wage	St. Louis City/ County	Transit Zones*	% Share
Less than \$1250	207,573	30,803	15%
\$1250 to \$3333	289,912	46,155	16%
More than \$3333	320,107	63,721	20%
Total:	817,592	140,679	17%

*1/2 mile buffer from transit stations. Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, 2009; Public Policy Research Center, UM St. Louis

Figure 4: Living Wage Jobs within Half Mile of a Transit Station

	Single Family Detached	Townhome Common Wall	Multi-family 4-story
Number of Units	1	2	40
SF/Unit	1,500	1,000	975
Price (per Feasibility Study)	\$120,000	\$100,000	\$750/mo
Cost Supported by Price	\$120,000	\$100,000	\$90,000
Total Cost/Unit	\$200,700	\$137,400	\$121,975
Surplus (Gap)	(\$80,700)	(\$37,400)	(\$31,975)

Figure 5. Subsidy Required for Different Types of Housing

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- ¹ Richard Hatcher was elected mayor of Gary, Indiana, before Stokes, but Stokes assumed office before him.
- ² The father of 2012 Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, Secretary Romney wrote this in a confidential memo to his aides. Quoted in Hannah-Jones, 2015.
- ³ According to the 2014 American Community Survey, the largest 50 cities gained white population, reversing a many decades long loss of white population (Frey, 2015).
- ⁴ The “Delmar Divide” was made famous by a BBC documentary which can be viewed at: <http://kplr11.com/2012/12/12/bbc-documentary-crossing-the-delmar-divide/>.
- ⁵ <https://www.census.gov/construction/charts/highlights.html>.
- ⁶ <http://www.zillow.com/ferguson-mo/home-values/>.
- ⁷ The decline of affordability in suburban locations becomes clear when you compare the map of affordability in the St. Louis metro for housing only with the map for affordability with housing + transportation. See <http://htaindex.cnt.org/compare-affordability/>. CNT determines transportation costs using multidimensional regression analysis to estimate auto ownership, auto use, and transit use based on factors including the nature of the built environment. See http://htaindex.cnt.org/about/HT_Index_Methods_2013.pdf.
- ⁸ Colin Gordon (2008) reports that the City of Ferguson, which is now majority black, engaged in these exclusionary practices throughout most of its history.
- ⁹ Poor suburbs were defined as those whose per capita income was less than 75 percent of the per capita income for the region.
- ¹⁰ By way of contrast, the City of St. Louis collected only 2 percent of its revenue from traffic fines and court fees.
- ¹¹ Weir cites Allard, 2009 on the latter point. See also Allard and Roth, 2010.
- ¹² Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis. Author’s files; available upon request. Joanna Mitchell-Brown reports that “nonprofit community development and citizen empowerment” remained almost nonexistent in the first suburbs of Cincinnati until the mid-2000s (Mitchell-Brown 2013, p. 185).
- ¹³ U.S. Census Small Area 2013 Estimates; available at: http://www.census.gov/did/www/saipe/downloads/sd13/sd13_MO.txt. To qualify for free or reduced lunches families must earn less than 185 percent of the poverty level. Information on eligibility for free and reduced lunches in the NSD was obtained from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: <http://mcde.se.mo.gov/quickfacts/Pages/District-and-School-Information.aspx?RootFolder=%2Fquickfacts%2FSchool%20Finance%20Data%20and%20Reports%2FFree%20and%20Reduced%20Lunch%20Percentage%20by%20Building&FolderCTID=0x012000B3EF86959C3A824680BF44E0680ED1F4&View={0E813976-3BD6-4D9B-9112-5DOC54B515E8}>.
- ¹⁴ This fact was corroborated by Caroline Ban, Manager of Government Affairs for Beyond Housing.
- ¹⁵ Information on 24:1 is drawn largely from Swanstrom, et al (2012).
- ¹⁶ Updated information on Beyond Housing’s accomplishments in 24:1 is from Stearn 2015.
- ¹⁷ Recent research shows that living near transit does reduce household transportation costs but the effect can be quite modest (Zhou and Zolnik 2013). In most metro areas it is difficult to dispense with driving completely. However, ride sharing and the spread of car rental services have made it more convenient for households to own “part” of a car – and therefore realize the savings of relying more on public transit. For a discussion of these issues, see Swanstrom 2009.
- ¹⁸ Examples of TOD in weak market settings are Eco Village Townhouses at 58th Street in Cleveland, Columbia Estates in Atlanta, Steel Gardens in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Parsons Place in East St. Louis. These examples are documented in an Economics Research Associates Report commissioned by Great Rivers Greenway in St. Louis (author’s files).
- ¹⁹ In the interest of full disclosure, I used resources from my endowed professorship at UMSL to help fund both the feasibility study and the civic engagement process.
- ²⁰ An additional 1,000-2,000 new residents would add 4,000-8,000 square feet to the potential for retail development (Development Strategies n.d., p. 66).

²¹ Information on the civic engagement process was obtained from an evaluation conducted by the Public Policy Research Center (2014). I also was a member of the Steering Committee and participated in one of the public meetings.

²² See <http://cmt-stl.org/pagedale-board-of-aldermen-adopts-transit-oriented-development-form-based-zoning-district-around-rock-road-metrolink-station-with-help-of-cmt-and-others/>.

²³ The quote is attributed to Tom Dewar.

²⁴ For an argument about the need to build civic capacity to do comprehensive community initiatives, see Swanstrom 2014.