

## **B. Growth and Evolution**

### **Origins**

The current 61.4 square mile City began as a small riverside village with an area of approximately 7.6 square miles. This village grew up around a trading post established in 1764 by Pierre Laclede Liguiste. In 1804 Laclede and Auguste Chouteau planned St. Louis as a linear village, concentrated along the River, like Montreal, with a grid of streets that was only three blocks deep and 19 blocks from north to south. Development occurred no further westward than the current 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. In 1809, the Territorial Court of Common Pleas incorporated the Town of St. Louis.

By 1816, the first subdivisions were established, extending the boundaries to 7<sup>th</sup>, St. Charles and Spruce. This brought the area total to 50 acres with a population of 3,000. Early business development occurred in North St. Louis where mills were located. In 1821, the population of the region grew to 9,732 and that of St. Louis to 5,500. In 1822, Missouri became a state and St. Louis was incorporated as a City. It was divided into three wards and a government with a Mayor and nine aldermen was formed. By then, the boundaries had extended north to what is now Ashley Street, and south to the location of the current Rutger Street, making the area of the City 385 acres.

In the 1820's the riverfront became a busy place as an outfitting post for trappers and explorers of the west. The government became a major player in the development of the City at this time. In 1823, it paved the main street which generated a series of building projects, including the levee, the Arsenal, Courthouse, and the Market House. This brought on a wave of construction by private developers too, which extended to all parts of the City.

The time between 1830-1840 was a time of booming growth for the City. The population grew from 6,694 to 16,649 and the physical expansion went west to 9<sup>th</sup>, south to Soulard, north to Washington and Franklin. Church construction was abundant, and the St. Louis Theatre and St. Louis University opened. The adjacent map illustrates the growth of the City within the Prime Study Area.

### **Steamboats**

The period from 1840 to 1850 was considered the Golden Age of Steamboating, due to push for westward expansion. By 1846, there were 1,200 steamers on the river, 50 at a time in St. Louis. Steamboat construction was the industry of the time. Growth continued parallel to river, since there were few means of transportation to move inland. More industrial activities developed. The introduction of the horse-drawn omnibus and eventually the horse-car lines allowed westward expansion in the late 40's. There was an influx of immigrants at this time and the City developed residential communities, expanding to the north, south and southwest.



## **Railroads**

The coming of the railroads in the mid-1850's had a huge impact on St. Louis. Railroads not only allowed westward expansion, but also provided a link from the river traffic to landlocked points west. In 1849, the state chartered the Pacific Railroad to cross Missouri from St. Louis to eventually connect with the transcontinental highway. The City, with its prime location at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, became the link to the northern and eastern United States and a key transfer point for goods. Warehouse and industrial development continued along the riverfront, and the City extended west to 18<sup>th</sup> Street. Population increased from 16,469 to 160,733. Demand for housing, goods and services were high.

By 1860, development had extended 6 miles west of the river. The first rail line would run through Mill Creek across Choteau's pond. The pond, once full of clean fresh water, became polluted with garbage and waste and was blamed for the cholera epidemic in 1849. The City filled it in 1851 and it thus became the location of the first rail lines. These became a barrier separating the City from the south and remain so today.

By 1870, the City covered approximately 18 square miles and the population had reached 310,000. It was the fourth largest City at the time. Plants developed along rail lines and formed industrial corridors. Multi family residential was constructed near the riverfront to house the industrial employees. In 1874, the Eads Bridge was completed across the Mississippi River, which connected St. Louis to the State of Illinois. Rail lines ran in underground tunnels to Mill Creek which prompted the development of Union Depot in 1875. This was replaced by Union Station in 1894, which handled passengers and freight was handled at Cupples Station, which opened in 1891. Large parks were established on the western edges of the City and large homes were built around them. The wealthy moved west.

## **The Current City of St. Louis**

In 1875 the Missouri Constitution was adopted creating "home rule". In 1876 the citizens voted on the final boundaries for St. Louis, separating it from the county and fixing its physical limits to 61.4 square miles to this day. The wisdom of this decision is still questioned. In 1891 the boulevard system was established, most of which ran east west. The remainder of the century development occurred in a corridor approximately 3 miles wide extending west-northwest from Downtown.

## **City Plan Commission**

1900 to 1910 was the last period of unmarred growth. In 1907 the first City plan was prepared. The City Plan Commission was established in 1911 to adopt a comprehensive plan and a zoning plan to guide the physical development of the City. The City limits contained three major areas: Grand Olive, Downtown and Lindell/Kingshighway. In 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition St. Louis Worlds Fair was held in Forest Park, the largest World's Fair. This was a catalyst for the development of facilities and activities in the west, outside the City limits.

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the grand east-west axis was first promoted for the City. The Mall was proposed from 12<sup>th</sup> to Jefferson in 1912 and goes to 21<sup>st</sup> Street today. The City Plan Commission concentrated on government buildings and improvement to streets because of the new prominence of the automobile. It undertook a citywide improvement plan for street lighting, sewer, streets, drainage and park and hospital construction. In 1923, \$86 million in bonds was approved by the citizens to make these improvements, the largest in the City's history.



## **Urban Renewal**

In the 1930's there was a shift to the social problems of the City. St. Louis was fully developed but decaying. The population had built-up, the riverfront was aging, and the multi-family housing north and south of Downtown was deteriorating. In 1936, the St. Louis Plan Commission recognized the need to revise the zoning regulations and to address sanitary laws and minimum housing standards. They advocated the removal of obsolete buildings and the construction of low cost, large-scale housing projects. They worked with the federal government on urban renewal. This proposal to rebuild the riverfront strip was delayed until 1950. By that time over 50% of housing supply was in various stages of deterioration. In 1939 the public housing program was formed and the St. Louis Housing Authority was established. By 1965, ten large-scale public housing developments, containing 8,045 units for 30,000 people, had been completed for more than \$100 million. The first two, Carr Square and Clinton Peabody Terrace were built in 1942. From 1953 to 1958 Cochran Gardens, Pruitt, Igoe, Vaughn and Darst Webbe were constructed. Several were immediately adjacent to Downtown. Some were successful and others were not, eventually being demolished. After 1968 projects were constructed by private developers and sold to the Housing Authority.

## **Mill Creek Valley**

In 1949 the federal government enacted legislation to help cities in redevelopment. Land cleared could be used for various purposes other than housing. In St. Louis, the Land Clearance Redevelopment Authority was created by the Board of Alderman in 1951 to buy and clear blighted areas and sell property to developers who agreed to rebuild in accordance with a plan. A change in Federal Urban Redevelopment law in 1954 allowed financing of commercial and industrial redevelopment.

Mill Creek Valley was the largest project of this kind in St. Louis, and one of the largest in the United States. Land acquisition began in 1958, producing new industrial sites, commercial sites, land for new highways and a 22-acre expansion for St. Louis University. The Housing Act of 1954 allowed rehabilitation as a method to produce housing and as a result, 2,500 new residential units were produced with City and private development money.

## **Interstates**

The Federal Highway Act in 1956 provided money for additions to the new interstate highway system. This, in combination with local bond issues started in 1955, provided funds to complete I-70 in 1961. Other highways and freeways to be completed by these incentives were US 40, I-64, I-55 and I-44. The development of these roadways hastened the decline of urban neighborhoods by encouraging sprawl to the south and north county. Retail businesses left the center City moving to the shopping centers and malls in the suburbs. The presence of the highways, while providing great vehicular access to Downtown, separated it from surrounding neighborhoods and the river.

## **Civic Center Redevelopment**

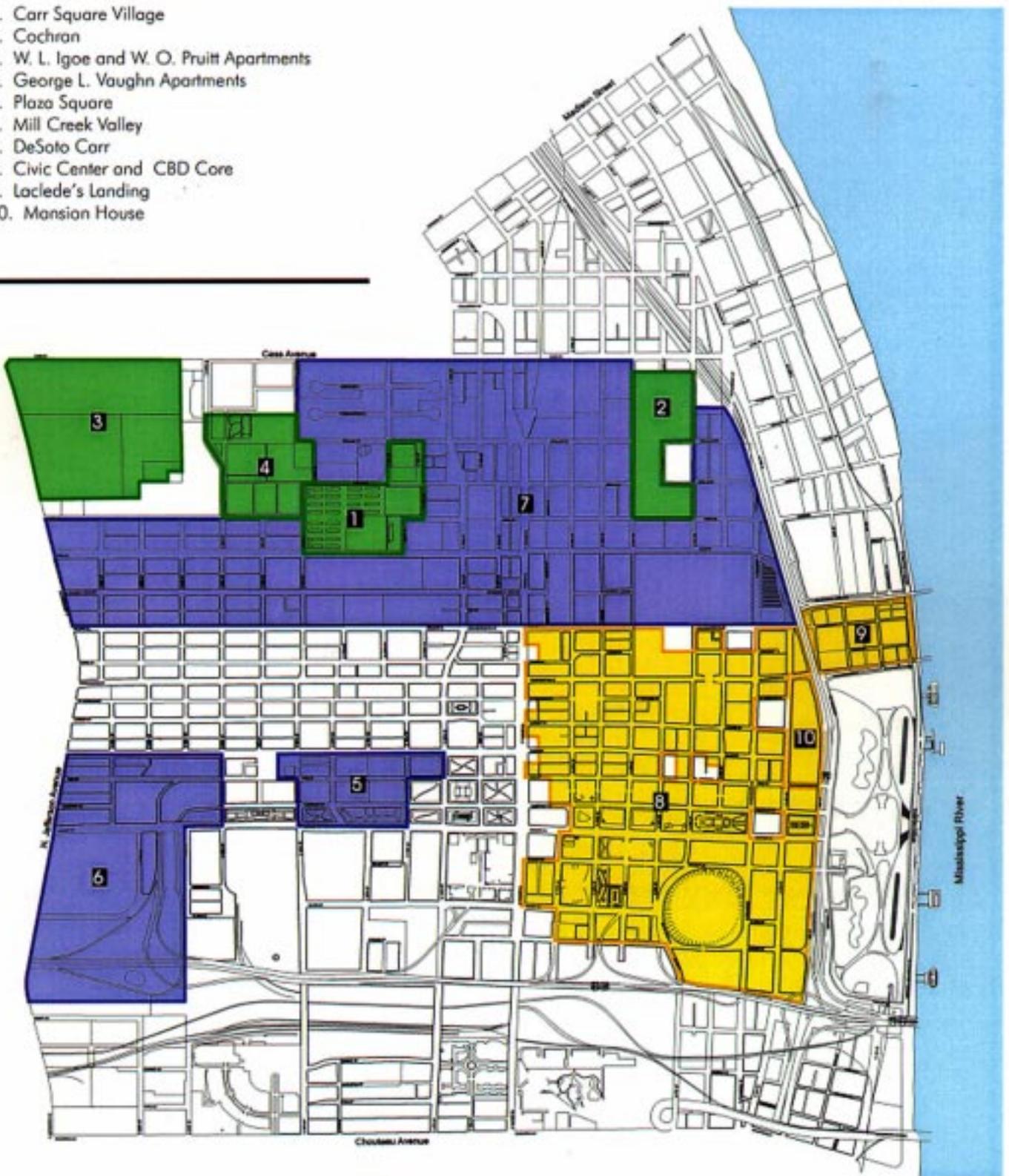
The Land Clearance Development Authority proposed a Downtown sports stadium complex in 1958 and, in 1960, the Board of Alderman approved an 82-acre blighted site as the project area. In 1960 a bond issue was passed to pay for public improvements. By 1962, the equity capital had been raised by the community. The



-  Public Housing
-  Urban Renewal
-  353 Development Incentive Areas



1. Carr Square Village
2. Cochran
3. W. L. Igoe and W. O. Pruitt Apartments
4. George L. Vaughn Apartments
5. Plaza Square
6. Mill Creek Valley
7. DeSoto Carr
8. Civic Center and CBD Core
9. Laclede's Landing
10. Mansion House



Notes:  
Base map provided by SLDC.  
Base data provided by the St. Louis City Plan Commission, June 1973 Plan.



stadium and parking garages were completed in 1966 and became an impetus for cultural and economic activity in the area.

### **Jefferson Memorial Arch Expansion Grounds**

The presence of the Jefferson Memorial Arch Expansion Grounds has had the most major impact on St. Louis since its completion in 1968. The original proposal for a memorial to the Louisiana Purchase located on the riverfront was made in 1933. Land acquisition started in 1937. In 1935, the bond issue was passed for the City share and President Roosevelt ordered the expansion of the Jefferson Memorial. War delayed the process but, \$30 million later, the Arch and the 80-acre expansion was completed in 1968.

### **Today**

Some of the originating urban settlement patterns are evident today in Laclede's Landing and the industrial area south of the Poplar bridge, with most of the surviving buildings in this area being second or third generation structures. The evolution of the Downtown urban fabric has shown a significant change through time. The height, bulk and style of buildings have responded to changing construction methods, development and economic trends. Yet, many of the early developments described above still have an impact on the future planning of St. Louis, as we will show in this plan.



# Existing Street Level Land Use

- Government
- Services
- Office
- Retail Trade
- Retail Trade - Eating/Drinking
- Entertainment/Recreation
- Multi-Family Residential
- Hotel/Convention
- Parks/Open Space
- Manufacturing/Industry/Distribution
- Transportation/Communication/Utility
- Institutional
- Parking
- Vacant Lot
- Vacant Building



Note:  
Boundary provided by SLDC.

