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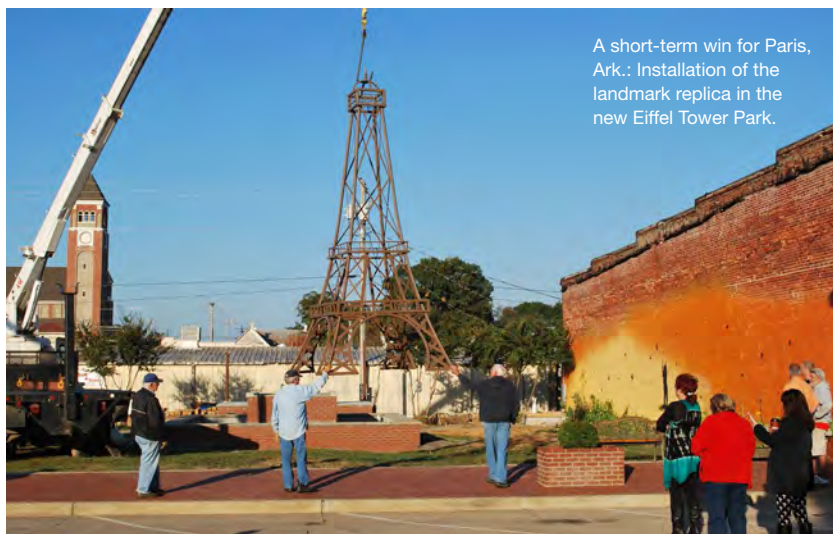
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## Arkansas Communities Focus on Action, Reap Results

By Amy Whitehead and Josh Markham

In the field of community development, there are alternative approaches to traditional strategic planning that embrace an asset-based, action-oriented approach to the community visioning and planning process. Several communities in Arkansas are seeing early signs of success in their community development efforts by using action-based planning models.

Strategic planning for communities is often approached as if communities are organizations; however, they are not. Communities are comprised of people loosely connected by their relationships, interests and geographic proximity. Organizations are regularly run through a top-down hierarchal approach, which is not always best suited to communities trying to organize a community-based plan. While traditional strategic planning can be effective for certain communities, this type of planning is frequently consultant-driven and expensive and, in the end, communities are not always prepared to implement the plan.



A short-term win for Paris, Ark.: Installation of the landmark replica in the new Eiffel Tower Park.

Under-resourced and rural communities may struggle to afford an expensive consultant, but they do have engaged local participants. By focusing on *planning* and *doing* simultaneously, communities can actively involve their members throughout the process. Taking an approach that leads to quick wins has the added advantage of building trust and fostering the development of the social

capital needed to implement long-term development. Communities should not delay in taking action on key priorities because they feel compelled to follow a traditional linear planning process. There are effective methods for low-cost community-based planning that encourage short-term wins and support long-term development efforts, while also emphasizing the development of social capital.

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*Bridges* is a quarterly publication of the Community Development Office of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. It is intended to inform bankers, community development organizations, representatives of state and local government agencies and others in the Eighth District about current issues and initiatives in community and economic development. The Eighth District includes the state of Arkansas and parts of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee.

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#### 23 **Scaling U.S. Community Investing: Unleashing the Potential of Individual Investors**

*Exploring Innovation in Community Development Webinar*

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**Visit:** [www.cvent.com/d/rfq67v](http://www.cvent.com/d/rfq67v)

#### 24-27 **Sustaining Community Change: Building Local Capacity To Sustain Community Development Initiatives (Joint International Conference of the Community Development Society and International Association for Community Development)** *Bloomington, Minn.*

**Sponsors:** Multiple

**Visit:** [www.comm-dev.org/2016-conference](http://www.comm-dev.org/2016-conference)

#### 27 **CRA Partnerships for Nonprofits and Bankers** *Little Rock, Ark.*

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**Contact:** Drew Pack at [andrew.a.pack@stls.frb.org](mailto:andrew.a.pack@stls.frb.org)

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**Sponsor:** Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

**Contact:** Teresa Cheeks Wilson at [teresa.cheeks.wilson@stls.frb.org](mailto:teresa.cheeks.wilson@stls.frb.org)

#### 12 **Delta Communities: Understanding the Credit Environment for Small-Business Development** *Helena, Ark.*

**Sponsor:** Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

**Contact:** Drew Pack at [andrew.a.pack@stls.frb.org](mailto:andrew.a.pack@stls.frb.org)

#### 15-18 **Midwest Community Development Institute** *Moline, Ill.*

**Sponsors:** Multiple

**Visit:** [www.midwestcdi.org](http://www.midwestcdi.org)

### SEPTEMBER

#### 21-23 **Reinventing Our Communities: Transforming Our Economies** *Philadelphia, Pa.*

**Sponsors:** Federal Reserve banks of St. Louis, Atlanta, Boston, Cleveland, Minneapolis, New York, Philadelphia and Richmond; Penn Institute for Urban Research

**Visit:** [www.philadelphiafed.org/roc2016](http://www.philadelphiafed.org/roc2016)

#### 28-30 **CFED Assets Learning Conference** *Washington, D.C.*

**Sponsors:** Multiple

**Visit:** <http://cfed.cvent.com/events/assets-learning-conference-alc-2016/event-summary-95aca38a8ab4427c9c7275ad3176c033.aspx>

## Arkansas Communities

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### Alternative Approaches to Community Strategic Planning

One alternative approach to traditional strategic planning is **Strategic Doing**, which requires communities and community development professionals to think differently about planning strategies. Traditional strategic plans are a method of getting from A to B. This linear mode of thinking asks communities to imagine a distant future goal and take incremental steps to achieve that goal.

Strategic Doing is an effective visioning process because it emphasizes collaboration and action on short-term goals that build a foundation for long-term development. Traditional methods can be an excellent way for communities to acquire a big-picture view of long-term macroeconomic issues; however, this can also lead to communities failing to implement changes as they lose momentum, getting lost in details and competing interests. Strategic Doing focuses a community's attention toward implementation from the beginning of the planning process by utilizing an asset-based approach and action-oriented collaborations.<sup>1</sup>

When considering long-range planning, a community should weigh the merits of traditional versus Strategic Doing approaches. Consultant-driven strategic planning can cost tens of thousands of dollars. For under-resourced and rural communities, this cost can be insurmountable. Strategic Doing presents a lower-cost alternative by utilizing community members throughout the planning process, keeping costs to a minimum. Strategic Doing does have some real expenses (e.g., costs associated with organizing community forums,

marketing the plan and implementing short-term development efforts), but this approach is typically more affordable than consultant fees.

The **Breakthrough Solutions** model is another alternative to traditional strategic planning that incorporates elements of Strategic Doing, appreciative inquiry and asset-based community development. "Breakthrough Solutions is based on the premise that incremental improvements are often not sufficient in times of rapid change," said Mark Peterson, professor of community and economic development with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. "It takes breakthrough solutions that leverage local assets to really move a community forward. Breakthrough solutions are asset-based, community-driven, technology-enabled and results-oriented."

### Successful Examples

Two Arkansas communities have utilized the Breakthrough Solutions model to realize short-term and long-term gains in their strategic efforts. Through a unique partnership between the extension service and the University of Central Arkansas, the communities have seen the benefits of a nontraditional planning process.

The program that connects these two universities with Arkansas communities is the University of Central Arkansas' Community Development Institute (CDI). CDI provides practical, applied training to community and economic development professionals from Arkansas and the Midsouth. Graduates of the program are eligible to participate in an advanced year class, working directly with one community during an intensive week of assessment and community listening activities. Class participants and the CDI team work

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**While traditional strategic planning can be effective for certain communities, this type of planning is frequently consultant-driven and expensive and, in the end, communities are not always prepared to implement the plan.**

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collaboratively with the community to develop a plan using the Breakthrough Solutions action process, based on the premise that citizens and local leaders can make a difference in their communities, but they must often see their region in new ways through the context of a global economy. The process also holds that the communities that survive and prosper are those that can come together to take action. This model has proven successful in two Arkansas cities: Heber Springs and Paris.

Planning in Heber Springs has been underway since August 2015 toward a five-year action plan. Because the community is taking an action-oriented approach, they have not waited to begin implementing key community priorities identified through collaboration with the CDI advanced year class.

"This planning process has been a true turning point for Heber Springs. Our community was poised for growth but without a specific objective or direction. The CDI team provided that direction for us. Now we have both short-term and long-term goals in six different areas of growth that we, as a community, are striving to achieve in solidarity," said Julie Murray, executive director of the Heber Springs Chamber of Commerce.

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## Community Advisory Council Applications Due in July

The Federal Reserve Board is accepting applications from individuals who wish to be considered for membership on the Community Advisory Council (CAC). The deadline for submitting applications is July 11, 2016, at 11:59 PM ET.

The CAC advises the Board on issues affecting consumers and communities and complements two of the Board's other advisory councils—the Community Depository Institutions Advisory Council (CDIAC) and the Federal Advisory Council (FAC)—whose members represent depository institutions.

The CAC serves as a mechanism to gather feedback and perspectives on a wide range of policy matters and emerging issues of interest to the Board of Governors and aligns with the Federal Reserve's mission and current responsibilities. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to, banking supervision and regulatory compliance (including the enforcement of consumer protection laws), systemic risk oversight and monetary policy decisionmaking, and, in conjunction with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), responsibility for implementation of the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA).

Additional information, including a link to the application, can be found at [www.federalreserve.gov/aboutthefed/cac.htm](http://www.federalreserve.gov/aboutthefed/cac.htm).

## Delta Regional Authority Opens Investment Application Period

The Delta Regional Authority has launched the 2016 application cycle for \$20 million of investments through its States' Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) and a new funding program, the Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF), to better support the local infrastructure, workforce and small businesses of Delta communities. The application cycle is open through August 31. Organizations and communities interested in applying can learn more and begin their application at [www.dra.gov/sedap](http://www.dra.gov/sedap).

## Arkansas Communities

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Early successes since the planning process include:

- a new downtown location for the town's chamber of commerce;
- creation of a foundation to organize and manage funds for local development projects;
- a \$180,000 award from the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department for tourism projects; and
- production of a web-based video in partnership with a local high school technology class to tell the community's story to potential visitors and residents.

Since 2014, the CDI team utilized the same process in Paris, Ark. When the community's five-year action plan was unveiled in May 2015, the community had already garnered several short-term wins, including:

- creation of the Eiffel Tower Park, including a replica of the tower, on the downtown square;
- development and adoption of a new brand and logo identity to be utilized on a variety of promotional materials;
- state approval to begin a workforce career center, which will provide much-needed skills training for the local workforce and support the skilled-labor needs of local industries; and
- expansion of the farmers' market to include more organic produce, specialty cheeses, handmade soaps, candies, crafts, summertime entertainment and growth of the micro-brewery industry in the area.

Once the initial planning was completed, the community continued to

implement parts of its plan by securing funds for construction of the workforce career center and enrolling their first classes at a temporary site. "UCA's Community Development Institute and U of A Cooperative Extension's Breakthrough Solutions program provided their expertise, experience and contacts to facilitate turning our dreams, hopes and ambitions for Paris into plans, organizations and projects with the confidence to continue to improve the lives and opportunities of the citizens of Paris," said Lee Lane, chair of the Paris planning team.

While some of these community success stories may have been set in motion before the planning process began, implementing them as part of the process helped build momentum and community capacity.

## Community Capacity Building

In addition to realizing short-term wins, action-oriented planning can also increase a community's social capital. A simple definition of social capital or capacity is "the extent to which members of a community can work together effectively to develop and sustain strong relationships; solve problems and make group decisions; and collaborate effectively to plan, set goals and get things done."<sup>2</sup> Because communities are essentially a collection of loosely connected networks, developing trust and relationships is essential to successful community-based planning. Trust becomes the foundation for strong social networks and capacity within these networks.

Strategic Doing and other models such as Breakthrough Solutions are uniquely suited to meet this need because they rely on building social capital through the interaction of diverse groups of volunteers throughout the planning process. Community



members often know each other but may not have worked together. These approaches seek to build social capital by asking community members to work together to achieve an outcome they are personally invested in.

There is no need to wait to take action for eight to nine months during planning. From the beginning, a community should identify its assets and short-term actions that can help reach long-term goals. These short-term actions and projects build community muscle. Over time, with each successful short-term project, communities become stronger and more prepared to work together on larger projects. Quick wins help build momentum and contribute to community capacity building.

### A First Step

The early stages of any community-based development effort are often the most difficult. Organizing volunteers, gathering community input and providing an inclusive environment for dialogue are just some of the early steps. As a result, it is easy for community leaders to feel overwhelmed. Sometimes an outside facilitator can be helpful, as in the case of Heber Springs and Paris, Ark. Whether working with an institution of higher education or using a purely local approach, a model of community planning that focuses on strategic action and short-term wins can result in increased community capacity and long-term success.

To learn more about the CDI, visit [uca.edu/cdi](http://uca.edu/cdi). To learn more about the

Breakthrough Solutions program and partners, visit [www.uaex.edu/business-communities/strategic-planning/breakthrough-solutions.aspx](http://www.uaex.edu/business-communities/strategic-planning/breakthrough-solutions.aspx).

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Amy Whitehead is the director and Josh Markham is the assistant director of the Center for Community and Economic Development at the University of Central Arkansas.

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1. Morrison, E. Strategic Doing for Community Development, 2012. In Walzer, N. and Hamm, G.F. (eds.): *Community Visioning Programs* (pp. 156-177). New York: Routledge.
2. Mattessich, P. Social Capital and Community Building, 2015. In Phillips, R. and Pittman, R.H. (eds.): *Community Development Handbook* (pp. 57-71). New York: Routledge.

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## CDAC SPOTLIGHT

# What Happens When the Least of These Gives the Most?

By Rita W. Green

In 1995, one elderly woman's act moved her from obscurity to well-deserved distinction. Hers is a story of simple living and great giving of herself to a community she deeply loved.

In July 1995, the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) announced that Oseola McCarty had given them more than half of her life's savings—\$150,000 (of \$280,000). This act was born out of a life that reflected satisfaction from work, contentment, financial discipline and a heart for others.

Washing machines, as we know them today, gained household popularity in the 1950s. McCarty was born in 1908. In those days, laundry was done

by hand. In her book, *Simple Wisdom for Rich Living*, McCarty describes her typical day. "I would go outside and start a fire under my wash pot. Then I would soak, wash, and boil a bundle of clothes. Then I would rub them, wrench them, rub them again, starch 'em, and hang 'em on the line. After I had all of the clean clothes on the line, I would start on the next batch. Well, I would wash all day, and in the evenings, I would iron until 11 o'clock." McCarty took great pride in her work and noted, "Everyone needs to work hard at something to feel good about themselves. Every job can be done well and every day has its satisfactions."

McCarty took no shortcuts when it came to doing a quality job with

the clothing she laundered. She tried an automatic washer and dryer in the 1960s, but found that "the washing machine didn't rinse enough, and the dryer turned the whites yellow."

McCarty's will to work was only rivaled by consistency at saving her money. To have accumulated \$280,000 from washing clothes from age 11 to 86 through a consistent savings habit is no small feat. According to McCarty, "I don't like to waste. I keep everything until it wears out. Usefulness often outlasts style. My secret was contentment. I was happy with what I had." McCarty said that "it's not the ones that make the big money but the ones who know how

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## CDAC Spotlight

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to save who get ahead. You've got to leave your investment alone long enough for it to increase." She shares that she would "go to the bank once a month, hold out just enough to cover my expenses, and put the rest into my savings account." McCarty charged as little as \$1.50 for a bundle of clothes when she began working, up to a maximum of \$10 in 1994 when she retired because of arthritis. Like any good steward, McCarty knew her limits but contended that although she couldn't do everything, she could do something to help people. That heart for others began with her family.

### CDAC MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



**Rita W. Green** is a state specialist for family financial management at Mississippi State University (MSU). An experienced consumer economics professor, she previously served as an assistant professor of human development and family studies with an emphasis in consumer economics in the MSU School of Human Sciences, and as a policy

adviser on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Research Extension, Education and Economics Advisory Board. Green is a NeighborWorks certified housing counselor and is a member of the Community Development Advisory Council (CDAC) for the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. She holds a doctorate in adult education and a master's in business administration from the University of Memphis, and a bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee at Martin.

CDAC members are experts in community and economic development and financial education. They complement the information developed through outreach by the Eighth District's Community Development staff and suggest ways that the St. Louis Fed might support local efforts. A list of current members is available at [www.stlouisfed.org/community-development/community-development-advisory-council](http://www.stlouisfed.org/community-development/community-development-advisory-council).

McCarty stopped attending school when was in the sixth grade to help care for her aunt, who also worked as a laundress along with her mother and grandmother. These women were the three biggest influences in her life. By 1967, they had all passed away. But McCarty was determined to do what she could to help other people, which is why she chose to give a large portion of savings to help others go to college. This unselfish act was underscored by the fact that she herself was unable to finish school and that the beneficiary, USM, did not admit African-American students until 1965.

McCarty had a deep sense of community and her gift inspired others to give. Because of her donation, USM did not have to wait until her death to begin distributing scholarships; others, moved by her act of giving, also contributed money, which more than tripled her endowment. Ted Turner responded to McCarty's gift by giving a billion dollars to charity.

McCarty cared about her community and explained that "building community is not that hard. It just takes ordinary friendliness. The woman who took me to the doctor when my arthritis got bad is a check-out person at my grocery store. When she helped me with my groceries all those years, we spoke and became acquainted." Because of McCarty's sense of community, several students have received a college education. She commented, "I am proud that I worked hard and that my money will help young people who worked hard to deserve it. I'm proud that I am leaving something positive in this world. My only regret is that I didn't have more to give."

McCarty was in a position to give because she diligently saved a portion

of her earnings. Mississippi State University (MSU) Extension encourages savings behavior by spearheading the Mississippi Saves campaign, part of the national America Saves initiative, which is celebrated the last week in February. The America Saves initiative is managed by the Consumer Federation of America, which seeks to motivate, encourage and support low- and moderate-income households to save money, reduce debt and build wealth. Commitment precedes action and Mississippi Saves encourages individuals and families to take the America Saves pledge at <http://mississippisaves.org> as the first step toward a lifestyle of saving money.

Saving money is a big step toward financial health, and financial institutions in Mississippi are doing their part to assist households in this effort. This year, Mississippi celebrates its first Bank On initiative in Hattiesburg, Miss. Bank On Hattiesburg is a partnership of the city of Hattiesburg, United Way, First Bank, MSU Extension and others. After making the savings commitment, being banked is important so consumers can follow through on that commitment and have a safe and secure place for their savings.

Oseola McCarty stands as that shining example of the idea that it's not the amount you earn but how you spend it that determines your financial outcome. And initiatives like Mississippi Saves and Bank On Hattiesburg can help consumers follow the example that she set. When consumers are able to financially secure their households, they become empowered to help others and improve the well-being of their communities.

# From Restaurant to Kitchen Incubator: Chef Space

By Jessica Grace

It's not often that one would find a pastry chef, barbecue grill master and dietary expert working out of the same kitchen. However, in Chef Space, a kitchen incubator in Louisville, Ky., this is often a daily occurrence.

Chef Space is a fully licensed commercial kitchen that is now home to local businesses including Caldwell's Quirky Cookery, a jam and preserves company that makes unique flavors like mint julep; and Em's Delights, a pastry company owned by an industrious 17-year-old!

For Community Ventures, a Kentucky-based nonprofit, Chef Space is the first step in a larger plan to revitalize the Russell Neighborhood, just downhill and west of Louisville's vibrant city center. From the turn of the century to the 1960s, Russell was a well-established and popular African-American neighborhood in Jefferson County, once known as "Louisville's Harlem." Theaters, restaurants and nightclubs lined the streets. In recent years, however, many of the area's middle-class residents have left for neighborhoods on the south and east ends of Louisville. The

streets of Russell are now lined with vacant properties and boarded homes.

Unfortunately, years of disinvestment have led to economic and social challenges for the area. Residents suffer from a community that is destabilized by unemployment, food deserts and predatory lending. The median household income of Jefferson County as a whole is 220 percent higher than Russell's \$14,457 median. The wide-range problems include housing, lack of jobs and a high crime rate.

With its years of neglect and immediate proximity to downtown, Russell is a clear choice for revitalization. Community Ventures has \$8.5 million currently invested and aims to bring sustainable growth through both commercial and residential development. The goal is to address the problems of rundown housing, lack of healthy food options and high unemployment.

Central to the mission of Community Ventures is empowering Kentuckians through asset building. One way the organization achieves results is through large-scale community improvement projects that focus on sustainable growth through housing

and economic development in one concentrated area.

Kevin Smith, president and CEO of Community Ventures, explains. "If you look around any healthy neighborhood, you see homes and businesses. We decided that if we were going to have a real impact on a community, we had to focus on creating places for residents to live and work."

The first critical step in this process of redevelopment is the creation of Chef Space. This 13,000-square-foot facility repurposed the former home of the much-loved Jay's Restaurant, which had been vacant for several years. Chef Space offers multiple food preparation and processing stations, access to capital, storage space and training opportunities for its members. Opened in November 2015, Chef Space currently has 13 subscribers, with the capacity for up to 50.

While many food entrepreneurs begin in a home kitchen, there is often a need for greater space and more suitable amenities as their business grows. This need for low-cost kitchen space led to Chef Space, which offers hourly or monthly rental rates.

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Chef Space, before (left) and after (rendering, right) revitalization efforts.

## From Restaurant to Kitchen Incubator

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Finding an affordable cook space is only the first step. Entrepreneurs who want to make a profit also have to successfully package, market and sell their products. That's where Community Ventures' business advisers step in. At Chef Space, members can work with these experts to chart a path to success.

neighborhoods and create the inclusive economic growth their communities need to thrive.

Chef Space is geared toward food startups and is touting a community focus. Already, many of the registered startups are run by women and minorities. It is a supportive space where like-minded entrepreneurs can work in proximity and feed off each other's passions and achievements.

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## Just last year, Community Ventures helped 67 families buy a new home and offered homebuyer education to over 57,000 potential homeowners.

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There are few options for aspiring entrepreneurs who do not qualify for a traditional bank loan. Chef Space, with the expertise of Community Ventures' business development advisers, provides flexible loan terms and provides training and consulting services to strengthen core business operations. Here, the success of local entrepreneurs can help revitalize

The second phase of the Russell Neighborhood revitalization plan is the Cedar Street Development project, which focuses on a four-block area in the Russell neighborhood; it will bring 26 new homes to the community.

In Russell, a high poverty area, 25 percent of the homes are vacant and dilapidated. Some eight years after the housing market collapse,

access to credit remains constrained and minority borrowers are especially affected. "We have people who can't own homes in their own communities," Smith said.

Just last year, Community Ventures helped 67 families buy a new home and offered homebuyer education to over 57,000 potential homeowners. In light of the housing crisis, there has been a re-emphasis on financial education for homebuyers. Community Ventures counsels and educates new homebuyers, making the process less overwhelming for first-time buyers. For many families, financial education can help pave a homeownership path.

Construction for Russell's first Cedar Street home began in April 2016. To find qualified homebuyers, Community Ventures has partnered with local faith communities to recruit residents within the neighborhood. There are already several potential buyers in the pipeline who have chosen their home's floor plan and lot space.

It is Community Ventures' hope that this holistic approach to redevelopment will bring real, sustainable growth to the Russell neighborhood. These endeavors aim to rebuild and renew the community through new businesses, new homeowners and a greater sense of place for its residents.

Expounding on this point, Smith said, "Creating a sense of place is key in neighborhood revitalization. Sense of place happens when individuals and families take ownership of their neighborhood. This occurs when they can own a home, feel safe, and are able to shop nearby."



Rendering of Cedar Street Development project, which will bring 26 new homes to the community.

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Jessica Grace is director of marketing and public relations at Community Ventures ([www.cvky.org](http://www.cvky.org)) in Lexington, Ky.



## Exploring Innovation in Community Development Webinars

This webinar series from the Community Development department at the St. Louis Fed allows community development professionals from across the Eighth Federal Reserve District to connect with industry experts to hear and discuss current developments and initiatives. Topics vary and are of interest to economic development professionals, financial institution representatives, community advocates and policymakers. Recent sessions include:

### Connecting Hard-to-Serve Populations with Jobs

- [Part 3 – Successful Solutions for Skilled Immigrant Integration](#)

### Scaling U.S. Community Investing

- [Part 1 – Overcoming the Challenge of Proving Impact](#)
- [Part 2 – Creating Liquidity in Impact Investing](#)
- [Part 3 – Unleashing the Potential of Individual Investors](#)

Both the audio and the presentation for all sessions are archived at [https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/EI\\_CDAudioConference](https://bsr.stlouisfed.org/EI_CDAudioConference).

## Workforce Development Survey

In 2015, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis collected data about the workforce development field in the greater St. Louis metropolitan area. A variety of community stakeholders were invited to participate, including workforce development providers and intermediaries.

Survey results will inform our work in the greater St. Louis area in 2016 and beyond. View the results at [www.stlouisfed.org/community-development/publications/workforce-development-survey](http://www.stlouisfed.org/community-development/publications/workforce-development-survey).

### Economic Development Podcast

- **The Federal Reserve: A Crucial Player in Informing Economic Development**

How does the Fed engage in economic development across the country? Daniel Davis of the St. Louis Fed and Will Lambe of the Atlanta Fed discuss various Bank initiatives in this podcast. To view the transcript or play the audio MP3 file, visit [www.frbatlanta.org/podcasts/transcripts/economic-development.aspx](http://www.frbatlanta.org/podcasts/transcripts/economic-development.aspx).

## St. Louis Fed's 2015 Annual Report Available

The St. Louis Fed's 2015 annual report is now available. The main essay focuses on the Federal Reserve's return to normal monetary policy after seven years of abnormally low interest rates, which were brought on by the financial crisis and Great Recession. The author presents a little bit of history of unconventional monetary policy, a little bit of background on normalization, a little bit of economic theory – and a lot of understanding on how we got here and how we're trying to get *out* of here. The annual report also includes messages from our new chair of the board of directors and from our president. In addition, photos and “by the numbers” tell the story of the St. Louis Fed's work and people. To read the report, please visit [www.stlouisfed.org/annual-report/2015](http://www.stlouisfed.org/annual-report/2015).

## Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2015

This new report provides a snapshot of the financial and economic well-being of U.S. households in 2015 and the issues they face, based on responses to the Board's Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking (SHED). The report provides new insights into numerous topics of current relevance to household finances, including economic preparedness and emergency savings, income and spending, banking and credit access, housing and living arrangements, auto lending, education and student loan debt, and retirement planning. This is the third year that the Board has conducted the survey and published a report of the survey's findings. Access the report and download the survey data at [www.federalreserve.gov/communitydev](http://www.federalreserve.gov/communitydev).

## 2015 Small-Business Credit Survey: Report on Employer Firms

This report presents findings on the business conditions, financing needs and access to capital based on the responses of nearly 3,500 small businesses from a 26-state coverage area. Read the report at [www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Files/PDFs/Community%20Development/Report-SBCS-2015.pdf](http://www.stlouisfed.org/~media/Files/PDFs/Community%20Development/Report-SBCS-2015.pdf).

# Bioscience as a Foundation for Transforming St. Louis

By Ben Johnson and Colleen Ward

The St. Louis region is fortunate to have an extraordinary concentration of world-class scientists in medical and plant biosciences. With the Top 5-ranked Washington University medical school and a leading vaccine center at Saint Louis University alongside the world's largest independent plant science institute—the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center—and corporate leaders like Mallinckrodt, Millipore-Sigma and Monsanto, St. Louis has long been a world leader in academic and corporate bioscience research and development. These assets help place the region among the nation's leading areas in research dollars committed to medical and plant sciences.

However, St. Louis has not always been as successful in translating its significant discoveries into new firms and jobs. Further, like the rest of the country, the region has experienced a clear shift out of manufacturing firms and into service firms. Significant downsizing in core industries—including the defense industry in the 1990s and more recent restructuring and closures in the automotive industry—has marked

this transition. In the late 1990s, several studies confirmed the potential for St. Louis to establish a nationally competitive bioscience cluster and recommended the region take advantage of its academic and corporate assets in biosciences to create a 21st-century knowledge economy.

Following from these reports, in 2001, under the leadership of William Danforth, an M.D. and chancellor emeritus of Washington University in St. Louis, BioSTL was established to execute the strategies and recommendations of the early planning studies and to serve as the facilitator and catalyst necessary for successful growth of an emerging bioscience cluster. The long-term vision of BioSTL, a non-profit organization, is to transform St. Louis, but not just in the biosciences. Leveraging the region's unique strengths in this area is a means toward an end—an environment, culture and economic vitality that will make St. Louis a magnet to attract and retain people of all ages to live, work, play and create.

To achieve St. Louis' potential, BioSTL has organized business,

university and philanthropic leaders around a set of deliberate strategies focused on new company creation and entrepreneur support (through BioSTL's subsidiary, the BioGenerator); company attraction (U.S. and international); improving access to investment capital (public, angel and venture capital); ensuring appropriate physical infrastructure (labs, incubators and research districts); government relations and public policy (federal, state and local); fostering an inclusive workforce and pipeline of entrepreneurs; and communicating the region's strengths.

Over the past decade, the St. Louis community has made significant strides in establishing the infrastructure to commercialize bioscience innovation and to capture the economic benefit for our local community. Some of the successes of these efforts include:

- more than 65 new bioscience companies launched by BioGenerator, with \$13 million in business investment attracting more than \$330 million in additional capital—greater than 25 to 1 leverage;
- the growth of the Cortex Innovation Community to revitalize an aging light-industrial area of midtown St. Louis, where \$500 million in development has generated more than 3,600 jobs and \$197 million in annual payroll; and
- the U.S. headquarters location of four international bioscience companies (in just the last two years), bringing 110 jobs and more than \$26 million in investment to the region.

While much of the economic activity resulting from BioSTL's work accrues in an underserved geographic area of the city of St. Louis, additional work is needed to connect

The long-term vision of BioSTL, a nonprofit organization, is to transform St. Louis, but not just in the biosciences.



opportunities of the new economy to the overall region's underserved communities and underrepresented minority populations. BioSTL believes that the St. Louis region will only achieve its potential if every individual, including those with entrepreneurial aspirations, has the opportunity to achieve economic success.

In 2008, BioSTL established the St. Louis Bioscience Inclusion Initiative with a vision to create a wholly inclusive bioscience community that engages all the promising talent of the region. The Initiative launched with a 20-person leadership roundtable—including chancellors of universities, C-suite executives of major bioscience employers, directors of the region's incubators and the heads of industry associations—to qualitatively benchmark the region's standing related to diversity in the biosciences. This Bioscience Inclusion Initiative Network, now totaling more than 90 individuals and organizations, sustains St. Louis' commitment to collaborative action that increases inclusion within its bioscience and innovation communities.

In 2013, BioSTL launched a new programmatic expansion of the Inclusion Initiative aimed at identifying high-potential women and minority bioscience entrepreneurs and providing a systematic pathway to create viable high-growth ventures. The program 1) builds *awareness* among underrepresented communities of the possibilities related to biosciences; 2) provides *engagement* opportunities for individuals to begin exploring their entrepreneurial interests; 3) provides *training* to build the skills of entrepreneurship; and 4) connects individuals to the *resources* necessary to start and grow a business, including networks, facilities and capital.

The entrepreneurship program has raised awareness through newspaper profiles, radio interviews, partner meetings and a network of partner organizations; engaged individuals in events that provided insight into opportunities in the bioscience community and connected attendees to entrepreneur support organizations who provided access to follow-up resources; trained participants in an introductory session on the rigors of bioscience entrepreneurship and recruited participants for a 10-week "Square One" entrepreneur boot camp; and provided cash grants to help entrepreneurs reach the next milestones in their business plan.

In 2015, BioSTL again expanded its inclusion activities by collaborating with its counterparts in information technology (ITEN) and advanced manufacturing (St. Louis Makes) to host *Vision 2015*, the region's first symposium aimed at building a wholly inclusive innovation community. 2015 also saw the launch of the "*Evening with...*" series, which highlights successful minority entrepreneurs and/or corporate innovators, with the understanding that it is hard to be what you cannot see.

Additionally in 2015, BioSTL launched a series of externship programs for minority high school students to discover science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) entrepreneurship and career opportunities. The series collaborates with the Diversity Awareness Partnership to extend their *EXPLORE* program model into biosciences and agricultural science. In addition to leading the program into new fields, BioSTL guided an expansion of the curriculum to add an innovation and entrepreneurship-focused day. Through the programs, more than 50 minority students grew to identify

themselves as STEM-capable learners. This year, BioSTL is replicating this series and further expanding into food science.

In October 2015, BioSTL was awarded one of the U.S. Small Business Administration's Regional Innovation Cluster Initiative Services contracts. The award builds on BioSTL's previous Regional Innovation Strategies awards from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and will allow BioSTL to further scale its small-business support programs. Specifically, the program will target underserved communities of the federally designated St. Louis Promise Zone through intentional outreach by the Inclusion Initiative and through a new entrepreneur training program conducted in conjunction with the Metropolitan Education and Training (MET) Center workforce training facility in an under-resourced, inner-ring suburb.

BioSTL's experience has demonstrated that the opportunity to boost regional prosperity for the long term is real and the time is right to scale up the endeavor to capitalize on St. Louis' enormous potential. Through all of its activities, BioSTL will continue to link emerging, new economy opportunities with low- and moderate-income populations and individuals from other underserved communities to ensure that the region is able to reach its full potential. Together with its many partners, BioSTL aims to transform St. Louis and all of its communities into a wholly inclusive, dynamic, prosperous innovation community.

For more information, visit [www.biostl.org](http://www.biostl.org).

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Ben Johnson is vice president of programs and Colleen Ward is communications manager at BioSTL.

# The Information You Need for the Impact You Want: Two New Websites Link Data with Donor Action

By Sutton Mora Hayes

The Midsouth has a new set of online tools to help citizens better understand their region—and support the nonprofit organizations that are working to make it better. [WHEREweLIVEmidsouth.org](http://WHEREweLIVEmidsouth.org) (WWL) and [WHEREtoGIVEmidsouth.org](http://WHEREtoGIVEmidsouth.org) (WTG) work together (WWL|WTG) to provide the public with current, accurate information about the health and livability of this region while also connecting them with nonprofit agencies that are working to improve its communities.

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While numerous cities across the country currently boast similar websites, WWL|WTG is unique in linking the two sites together as a seamless system.

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While numerous cities across the country currently boast similar websites, WWL|WTG is unique in linking the two sites together as a seamless system. Visitors are directed intuitively from one site to the other, maximizing the usefulness and impact of both. More than two years of planning went into the development of this project, which was launched in November 2015, led by the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis (Community Foundation) and supported by an unprecedented collaboration among 17 other local foundations, corporations and nonprofit funders.

## Information Unlocks Potential

WWL|WTG work together to give residents access to information about their community and to help them make decisions regarding impacting the issues that are important to them. Unlike anything else in the Midsouth, these tools let people use data to drive change.

The websites empower local residents with useful data about their neighborhoods, their cities and the organizations that are asking for their support. Residents are thinking harder about how their donations are really making an immediate, tangible impact in the world around them. Community Foundation and its project partners have a responsibility to be local leaders in this movement toward transparency, openness and community empowerment.

## WHEREweLIVEmidsouth.org

WWL allows people to look at the Midsouth area in different ways, from a regional macro level all the way down to the block where they live. The dashboard uses data from a variety of public sources to show people objective, current information on many different livability and health factors, such as:

- How walkable is the area?
- How many parks and trails are nearby?
- Are there health clinics in the immediate vicinity?

WWL showcases data from both national and local sources. The site's interactive maps allow users to

compare counties, cities, ZIP codes or census tracts along hundreds of data sets, which will be updated several times a year. Any community organization that needs a platform to showcase its data may request inclusion on the site.

## WHEREtoGIVEmidsouth.org

WTG is a directory of nonprofit organizations in the Greater Memphis area. Organizations can create their own profiles and provide information about their mission, staff, major programs and finances. There are currently over 155 nonprofits listed in the website's directory. Visitors to the site can search these profiles and find organizations that are working on issues important to them (e.g., after-school tutoring programs in South Memphis, animal services agencies in East Memphis, environmental causes in Midtown).

WTG was built in partnership with Guidestar, the nation's leading source of information about nonprofit organizations. The financial data is imported directly from IRS Form 990 presented by Guidestar, but the rest of the profile is built out by the individual nonprofits themselves. Since each profile is set up the same, users can compare nonprofits in a more consistent way than reviewing just the organizations' 990s or websites.

WTG allows people to immediately make a financial contribution of any size to the nonprofits included in the directory. Community Foundation staff review all information submitted by the nonprofits for accuracy and clarity.



## WWL|WTG: How it Works

WWL features easily understandable community indicators showing the status of a community using information collected from hundreds of data sets. As an example, you may look for information, sorted by ZIP code, around community development, one of nine categories searchable on the site. A dropdown provides many options to look at (e.g., percent of developed parcels, average age of commercial buildings, the distance to the nearest park). You can dig down to your street level or look at the region as a whole. (See Figure 1.)

WWL allows visitors to directly link to information about community development (as well as 14 other local issues) on WHEREtoGIVEmidsouth.org. There, you can read about the status of the community development industry in the Midsouth. Each snapshot of local issues is written by a content leader in that area. In this example, the community development section was provided by the Community Development Council of Greater Memphis.

On the WTG site, visitors can get a deeper analysis of content areas beyond the map and can link to additional resources to get even more information. Over time, the site development partners intend to grow the resources to include community plans, data reports and other useful information. These pages should be the one-stop shop for important issues affecting the Midsouth.

Finally, visitors can also view related organizations that are working in community development on WTG. If you are trying to find out where to engage—financially, as a volunteer or as a possible employee—your search is now much more targeted, with the

option to really focus on the organizations that are doing the work in which you are interested. Organization profiles typically include information on mission and areas served, programs, management, governance and financials (see Figure 2). If you are so inclined, you can then donate directly to the organization.

All of the funding and site development partners hope that this will allow users to be more strategic in their giving, but we also hope that neighborhood leaders will use WWL|WTG to help guide planning for their neighborhoods, and that government and business leaders will use the sites to learn more about the communities in which they are investing. The possibilities are endless, and the more people use WWL|WTG, the more each site can be refined to provide exactly what the community needs.

We invite you to explore the sites and take a deeper dive into the areas most important to you—education, community engagement, jobs, etc. If you work with an organization that may want to become a data partner or if you know a nonprofit that would benefit from being listed in the directory, please have them contact Mia Madison, director of community information, [WHEREtoGIVEmidsouth.org](http://WHEREtoGIVEmidsouth.org), at 901-722-0020 or [mmadison@cfgm.org](mailto:mmadison@cfgm.org).

Sutton Mora Hayes is executive vice president and COO of the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis.

FIGURE 1  
WHEREweLIVE.org

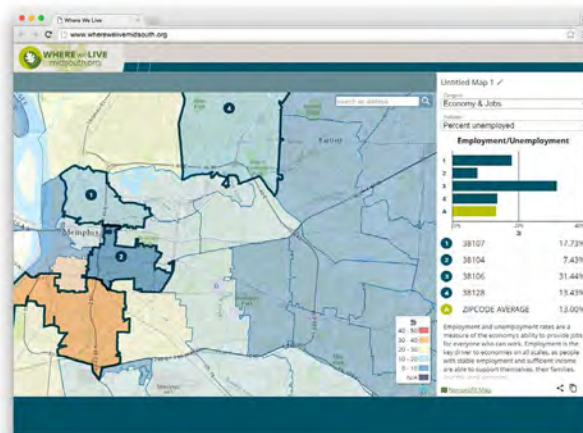


FIGURE 2  
WHEREtoGIVE.org

