

Development Statement of the North Side Community Benefits Alliance

Reclaim, Rebuild and Sustain our Communities

WHO WE ARE:

The North Side Community Benefits Alliance is a non-profit group of concerned North St. Louis residents and their allies.

MISSION STATEMENT:

Building upon our diverse ethnicities, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds, the North Side Community Benefits Alliance advocates for a holistic approach to community planning and development in North St. Louis, through equitable public policies and the just allocation of public and private investments.

VISION STATEMENT:

The North Side Community Benefits Alliance envisions equitable and sustainable development of our socially and economically diverse neighborhoods and communities in St Louis, north of Delmar Blvd. We support the redevelopment of North St Louis from a comprehensive approach that includes diverse partners and stakeholders. It is our belief that community and economic development is most effectively achieved from a meaningful and resident-centered decision-making process. Transitional communities are best served when residents are empowered with the proper tools and resources to restore their neighborhoods from the ground up. We believe that the development and preservation of safe, decent affordable housing is fundamental to building and sustaining inclusive and healthy communities.

WHAT WE WANT:

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community-Centered Planning and Development: We want public meetings where the developer comes to us, listens to us, and creates a plan that includes our input. Citizens must be part of the decision-making process from conception through completion. By empowering citizens, we can be more active in our communities and build neighborhoods that are safer, more beautiful, healthier, and more desirable. By including citizens in the process, we can bring pride back to our communities; when everyone has a stake in the success of a neighborhood, it is naturally resistant to crime and blight.

Prioritize Affordable Residential Development: We expect the City of St Louis will pass inclusionary zoning ordinances, with a set percentage of affordable new construction or rehabbed homes and multi-family housing, including setting aside foreclosed homes as affordable housing opportunities. Our neighborhoods are diverse; development must build upon that valuable diversity. We believe that affordable housing is not only just and fair, but is integral to creating healthy neighborhoods and preserving the possibility of success for people from all walks of life.

Protection from Eminent Domain Abuse: We firmly reject the idea that eminent domain of occupied property is necessary for development. We expect there to be no eminent domain of occupied housing, whether owned or rented, or of operating businesses or institutions or their holdings. Any occupied building that becomes vacant will

be considered occupied for 18 months for the purposes of eminent domain. A developer who wants a property can either work with a willing seller to find a market-rate price, or can choose to retrofit the development plan around the existing owner and building. There is plenty of open space in North St. Louis, and a clever planner can always come up with an alternate solution to eminent domain.

Neighborhood Development Advisory Boards: We propose the creation of Neighborhood Development Advisory Boards to act as liaison to the St Louis Preservation Board, so that the Preservation Board understands and acts on the community standards of each affected neighborhood. Each NDA Board should be comprised of a minimum 60% residents and 40% representatives of CDC and/or neighborhood businesses or associations.

Neighborhood Control of Preservation and Demolition: We propose an immediate moratorium on demolition north of Delmar, and meaningful neighborhood control of preservation and demolition. In order to preserve the valuable housing stock and architectural heritage north of Delmar, we believe that all of north city should be put under a revised form of Preservation Review, where proposed demolitions would need to be approved by the Neighborhood Development Advisory Board prior to review by the St. Louis Preservation Review Board. In addition, we expect any emergency demolitions be approved by the Neighborhood Advisory Board prior to approval by the Building Division, to prevent a developer from using this known loophole in preservation planning to demolish salvageable historic buildings which meet community standards for rehabilitation. This will preserve the community's ability to access the State Historic Tax Credit program as an engine for economic development.

Predevelopment Neighborhood Maintenance Fund: We expect that if the city funds or finances a "transformational" development project, it should also establish a Predevelopment Neighborhood Maintenance Fund to protect existing property values in the development footprint and ensure that current residents are not dislocated as the result of negligent property maintenance during the transformation process. This fund could be used to assist residents who are financially unable to make necessary code improvements, or to maintain the property of a negligent developer or speculator and charge the owner for the service. The fund would be overseen by the Neighborhood Development Advisory Board, with funds administered by a local nonprofit intermediary until the advisory board builds capacity. We propose the predevelopment neighborhood maintenance fund be funded by a combination of community development block grant funds and mandatory developer contributions and other funding sources.

Protections of Housing Conservation Program: We call on the city to rectify the Housing Conservation District ordinance so that our beloved north side neighborhoods are no longer redlined from city services such as proactive lead abatement, effective problem property policies, building division code enforcement, and pre-occupancy health and safety inspections for all properties. We ask for an equitable share of Lead-Safe St. Louis, Refuse, Streets, Forestry and Building Division resources.

Assistance to Stay or Relocate: We understand that even the most careful development can bring rising costs to current property owners and renters who wish to stay. We expect that any tax abatements offered to developers will also be offered to current property owners and that rent ceilings will be established for current renters. We also believe that those who choose to relocate should be assisted as required under the law, and should be helped to afford similar housing to their current situation in their new location.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Affordable Commercial/Retail Development: We expect the City of St Louis will pass inclusionary zoning ordinances, with a set percentage of affordable commercial and retail spaces to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit that will make our neighborhoods successful long-term.

First Source Employment Guarantee: We expect that local residents will have access to the new jobs created within the redevelopment area. Mechanisms include guaranteed interviews for qualified local residents, including those displaced by development, from a referral system or talent pool coordinated local Community Development Corporations.

Local Needs Guarantee: Local Needs Guarantee: We expect a city mandate that any developer proposing to transition our communities will attract and/or create businesses that address local needs. We need grocery stores, restaurants, pharmacies, day care centers, health care centers and recreational opportunities for youths, just for starters.

Street Grid and Transit-oriented Development: We believe that maintaining and restoring our walkable urban street grid is essential to residential and commercial development. The goal is to have a street grid and system of sidewalks with city blocks that are not too large to walk. We believe that public transit routes should be considered as a fundamental part of any urban plan, with the developed area effectively easing the mobility of passenger vehicles, public transit, and pedestrians.

Equitable Investment of Public Funds: Before local, state and federal funds are allocated to private development projects, we advocate for a city-wide impact analysis to ensure we don't continue, as a region, to simply enrich the more politically powerful areas of our community at the expense of the less powerful areas. We expect transparency, accountability, and equitable development from companies and non-profit organizations receiving taxpayer funding or financing.

Equitable Investment of CDBG Funds: We expect that the use of Community Development Block Grant funds in North St. Louis will meet the "Four Tests" to show a measurable benefit to low- to moderate-income (LMI) residents: 1) housing benefit, where at least 51% of the created housing is affordable and occupied after construction by LMI residents; 2) job creation or retention, where 51% of the jobs are filled or available to LMI residents; 3) the limited clientele test, where a service benefits a specific group that is 51% LMI; or 4) the area benefit test, where general improvements in a primarily residential area are clearly designed to primarily meet the needs of 51% of area LMI residents.

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