

# **Saint Louis: A World Class City Position Statement**

**Presented by the Planning Committee for Saint Louis: A World-Class City  
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## Introduction

In 1876, residents of the City of Saint Louis voted to separate from Saint Louis County and ever since the region has regretted that action and suffered because of it. From the 1950s to the 1990s, the city lost population, in part due to a false perception of the city as crime-ridden, a perception that affects the whole region. Intraregional competition and government fragmentation in the county presents obstacles to efficiency and economic growth. Until these and related issues are addressed, the entire region will continue to fall behind other metropolitan areas in the United States.

The Brookings Institute has categorized the U.S. into 100 top metropolitan areas and ranks Saint Louis as the 18th largest of the 100 metro areas. Brookings asserts that these 100 metropolitan areas are the real economic engines of the U.S. economy. If the United States economy is to revive, these 100 metro areas need to thrive <http://www.brookings.edu/metro.aspx> When economic and political realities no longer fit their 19th century legal and technical definitions, we need a 21st century redefinition of what "city" and "region" mean. [See Appendix A for official definition of region.]

As Dean Charles Schmitz wrote in an opinion piece published in the *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch* (June 30, 2010), "Saint Louis is a world-class city, of that I have no doubt. But the truth is, the perception of Saint Louis does not equal that reality, and we need to fix that. Perception is reality." It is time to rectify that mistake of the past. It is time for Saint Louis to rejoin its original county so that the entire region may prosper in the global economy of the 21st century (Schmitz, 2010).

## Project Narrative

This prospectus outlines the steps that need to be taken to organize such a changeover to reflect the reality of regional inter-dependence. The document identifies some of the issues, but the problem requires a careful analysis with multiple perspectives. We propose to begin the conversation in earnest.

The Planning Committee [Appendix B] is a grass-roots effort that has never been tried previously and consists of residents of both city and county, volunteers who have been meeting and discussing this effort for several months. Our goals are to achieve regional reunification through:

- A statistical re-classification of Saint Louis to attack the negative characterizations often seen in the media (high in murder rates, etc.)
- A media/public relations campaign to identify Saint Louis as a "world-class city" for purposes of operating differently in a global economy
- An outcome that leaves all other municipalities in Saint Louis County untouched by this move, as opposed to previous efforts toward merger or consolidation which proposed to eliminate many smaller municipalities.

## Challenges

The first challenge is to fully define the problem and all of its many dimensions. We need to identify all of the legal, technical, political, social, financial and economic issues in order to solve them. The region has a great track record in merging functional services, but as Professor Terry Jones has pointed out: "we have merged one or two services about every five years." [The Great Debate, 2010; see Appendix C for list of regional coordinated services]. Although the region is admired for its use of this strategy, at that pace we will die off before we can take full advantage of the opportunities we currently envision (e.g., the China Hub). Continuing to use the regional cooperation approach of merging services without joining entities will take too long. If we do not accelerate the pace of reinventing the region, we will continue to fall behind in the competitive race for jobs, jobs, jobs.

1. Redefine the region: There is widespread misunderstanding that the "city is the region, and the region is the city." This problem stems in part from the various government and media characterizations of "Saint Louis" as just being within the city limits of 61 square miles and 350,000 people vs. the region of more than 2.8 million. For example, the FBI uses the city boundaries to report crime statistics. If they were reported per capita, Saint Louis would not be a leader in this statistic.
2. Change perceptions and rapidly accelerate that change: To the country and the globe we are known as Saint Louis, regardless of where we live in the region. Yet, across the country and the world, too many people perceive Saint Louis as a small, socially backward, racially polarized place. Image is everything in today's fast-paced information environment. Although the City of Saint Louis has begun to regain population among a key demographic group of young professionals, we still lose too many of them, especially college graduates. Their choice to locate here after college and the decision of their employers to build and expand here are critical to the future of the region.
3. Increase regional cooperation: In today's difficult economy, city and county residents alike want efficiency and streamlined government. Several other regions (such as Indianapolis and Jacksonville) have used regional restructuring to make significant economic progress and redefine themselves. [See Appendix D for details and other examples.]
4. Change the conversation: The current mayor and county executive have raised the issue. Language is important. How we talk about these issues reflects the fears and concerns that people have lived with for many years regarding control over their lives and property. As a region, we need to build consensus on the short-term and longer-term priorities and a long-range plan. Merger, re-entry, reunification, consolidation, annexation - we need to explain all of these terms legally and politically so that citizens will understand clearly what changes are being proposed and how those changes might affect them directly. If we propose only the re-entry of the City into Saint Louis County, do we accomplish our larger goal of changing perceptions of the region externally? If we propose a merger, do we risk failure and preclude the possibility of doing anything constructive? These are the questions that need to be asked, but it is no longer acceptable for these conversations to be confined to the top corporate boardrooms. Those boardrooms have closed and relocated.

## Multiple Issues

It is frustrating that Saint Louis City has fallen behind Kansas City as Missouri's largest city, even though our Saint Louis metropolitan area is far greater than the Kansas City metropolitan area. In fact, Saint Louis has fallen to 53rd in the U.S. population statistics when comparing just the city's corporate boundaries. That puts us behind Wichita, Kansas at #52. San Antonio, on the other hand, with a far smaller metro population, is considered the 10th largest city in the country. (See Appendix E for regional and national population trends.)

Other regions in the country have been able to address their own similar challenges with population change and growth. Indianapolis was able to annex its suburbs; Saint Louis cannot do that under present laws. Saint Louis City and Saint Louis County are land-locked and cannot expand geographically. Louisville, when faced with the prospect of Lexington, Kentucky, passing it by as the largest city in the state, also was able to consolidate with its county. Jacksonville, Florida and other cities have accomplished consolidation using a variety of approaches.

Although Saint Louisans have tackled this problem many times in the past, there has never been a grass-roots effort. Those previous failed attempts were led by politicians. They decided on the timing, the scope and the approach. Their cost/benefit studies were not shared widely. People are suspicious of government and are seeking to reduce the role and size of government right now. The Planning Committee feels that a grass-roots effort led by citizens and local businesses can avoid the

partisan political baggage that has doomed earlier efforts. Recent passage of the Metro tax and other successful regional collaborations suggest that a newer generation and a new type of economic environment will combine to bring about this long-needed reunification.

We have focused on re-entry of the city into Saint Louis County as the first goal. This means that the City of Saint Louis would become the 92nd municipality in Saint Louis County. It would then become the largest municipality in the County, but this approach would not eliminate the other 91 municipalities. For some, this is not going far enough; the Committee feels that this is doable; it is a goal that can be accomplished in a reasonably short time. We are not interested in interfering in local control of these other municipalities. Nor are we determined to interfere in the municipal governance of the City of Saint Louis. We think it would benefit both the 91 municipalities of Saint Louis County and the City of Saint Louis to join more closely for the overall benefit of the region. Saint Louis would continue to have a Mayor and its own local council (the Board of Aldermen) just as Brentwood and Kirkwood have their own Mayors and councils, while also being part of Saint Louis County.

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Similarly, we are not at this time focusing on school districts, fire districts, and other entities. While some may argue that broader consolidation should be done, we need to start somewhere and the logical first step is the return of the City of Saint Louis to its original place within Saint Louis County. This is a bold move and one that would effectuate many immediate benefits including changing the conversation about who we are and allowing the region to define itself rather than be defined by external forces. We take control of our own economic future.

In our view, the following major tasks need to be accomplished in order for us to move forward with this project and for Saint Louis to once again take its place as one of the top cities in the United States and a center for global commerce.

## **Legal Issues**

We know there are legal impediments to the rejoining of city and county. One is the provision in the Missouri Constitution that now declares that the state is made up of "114 counties and one city." There are other laws affecting Home Rule, annexation, re-entry of city into the county, and there may be additional legislative remedies that need to be investigated to determine which legal path is the best way to accomplish our goal. The committee had preliminary consultation with a local attorney who is an expert in municipal law. He pointed out that it may take a constitutional amendment to change that definition of the state political boundaries. One possible advantage of a constitutional amendment would be that it would require a statewide vote, not merely one subject to approval by Saint Louis City and Saint Louis County voters. It may also be possible to accomplish this reunification through repeal of some existing statutes such as the Board of Freeholders language.

Another possibility would be to approach the Census Bureau and the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) about creating a new category altogether, one which also would recognize new global economic realities. The Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program is consistent with this idea, which they refer to as new "new spatial territories." They have been promoting the idea of the U.S. economy as driven by "forty metropolitan areas" of the country's 100 largest regions, including Saint Louis. An ultimate goal perhaps would be to recast the entire 12 county Saint Louis region within the federal definitions. [For more on the Brookings Metro Policy Program, see [http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/0914\\_metros\\_katz.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/0914_metros_katz.aspx)

## **Cost-benefit analysis**

Residents of city and county, and of the state of Missouri, need to understand the costs and benefits, advantages and disadvantages of such moves. In years past, County Executive Gene McNary commissioned such a study, and Civic Progress has also conducted such a study. There are economies of scale and savings that can be achieved. These past studies may be helpful, but they need to be updated to reflect current economic and market conditions, population changes, and other factors. Professor Terry Jones estimates that the level of local control in Saint Louis County adds at most 15%-20% to the local general purpose government tax bills of residents [The Great Debate]. The Planning Committee is confident that such an updated analysis will show that tax reductions for both city and county residents can be achieved by eliminating costly duplication of services. A new study needs to be undertaken and widely distributed.

## **Strategic planning**

We anticipate these analyses will determine that the best approach would be re-entry, although there may not be a broad consensus on that conclusion at this time. If the legal and financial analyses bear out our thinking, a strategic plan can be created to accomplish the re-entry process, including a timeline and ballot proposals, as needed. The Planning Committee commits to continuing its dialogues with community groups, municipal governments, civic and business leaders to help deepen understanding of the advantages of such a move for the betterment of our region. The Committee will create a speakers bureau and subcommittees of various interest groups [see Appendix F] which can provide speakers to community groups throughout the region. Included in the strategic plan would be a strong media strategy. The region needs a public relations effort and a sustained public education and community engagement process because we see this as a long-term effort. We need to expand media outreach to print, radio and TV as well as alternative news outlets and blogs.

## **Fund-raising**

If the World Class City Group is to move this agenda forward for the good of the Saint Louis region, funding from the broader community will be necessary. We cannot tell our story without financial support from the Saint Louis community.

## **Website and Social Media**

Metro Electric is offering to host the website to help us continue to move forward. We need to have a site where citizens can ask questions and review the ongoing discussion. This effort would have to be exceptionally transparent, with documents and frequently asked questions, historical accounts of how we got here, planning studies, and financial analysis -- all accessible to anyone who visits the well-publicized website. In addition, social media and alternative news outlets can be used effectively to contact individuals and groups who may have questions or concerns about this step and to recruit supporters.

## **The Planning Committee**

In June 2010 Dean Schmitz participated with other Saint Louis business leaders in a tour of Indianapolis sponsored by the RCGA and was drafted to write the op-ed article, outlining his ideas about Saint Louis as a "world-class city." Dean Schmitz and Bill Frisella met and discussed the idea of launching a grass-roots effort to make it happen. They began recruiting others who evidenced interest in this effort. Through word-of-mouth and responses to the op-ed article, a group of approximately 20-30 people began to meet monthly at Mr. Frisella's business in Brentwood to

discuss the pros and cons and approaches that might work. The Planning Committee has been meeting regularly since July 2010.

After consulting with local legal counsel and legislators, and after holding vigorous discussions of its own, the Planning Committee recognizes the complexity of this undertaking. Our goal is to make this as simple and painless a process as possible. What we seek is the re-entry of Saint Louis into Saint Louis County to effectuate a statistical reclassification of our region among the top ten cities in the country. If Indianapolis and San Antonio can do this, we believe that Saint Louis can and should achieve this change in perception of our region. After all, Saint Louis is a world-class city and the world needs to know that.

## Conclusion

Saint Louis is a world-class city with many world-class attributes. [See Appendix H for a very abbreviated list.] We need to begin planning to accomplish this reunification, or we risk falling farther behind in the rush of a quickly changing world economy. Doing nothing means falling behind. "If we merge Saint Louis City and Saint Louis County, we would be the seventh largest city in the United States. Yes, seventh." Dean Schmitz' article has brought forth a groundswell of interest in finally moving Saint Louis back into the ranks of the nation's elite cities. This will not be a quick-fix as our past attempts have shown; however, we need to begin to lay the groundwork, to change perceptions of our shared reality, and to unshackle the region from our self-imposed limitations so it can grow and prosper in the future.

## Resources

Legal Feasibility Study, Bryan-Cave, 1984-85: [View Document](#)

NPR, July 12, 2010. Panelists discuss mergers on the Air: [Link](#)

The Great Debate, October 19, 2010, sponsored by Washington University Law School, KETC, Saint Louis UrbanCorps, and ...

U.S. Supreme Court, Quinn v. Millsap (1989)491 U.S.95, 109 S.Ct. 2324, 105 L.Ed2d 74

Saint Louis Post-Dispatch

"Dooley says city-county merger would benefit entire region" September 28, 2010

"Corrigan lays out goals, reject city-county merger." September 29, 2010

Charles Schmitz, "[Saint Louis is a World Class City](#)", Saint Louis Post-Dispatch

Brenner, Falko. "100 cities of the world." Parragon.

Huber, Joe (May, 2010). The History and Possibilities of a Saint Louis City-County Reunification.

Retrieved from <http://www.stlurbancorps.org>

## Appendix A: Official definition of the region

The definition of Saint Louis as a metropolitan region stems from two sources. First, the state of Missouri defines its own political subdivisions as "114 counties and one city," with the City of Saint Louis as a separate unit. Historically this occurred in 1876 when the City of Saint Louis withdrew from Saint Louis County and set its present-day boundaries. See statutory link at <http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutes/C000-099/0460000040.HTM>

The second source is the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) which determines "core-based statistical areas" for use by the U.S. Census Bureau. OMB actually has a number of categories, including (in descending order based on size)

- **Combined Statistical Areas (CSAs)** [Saint Louis-Saint Charles-Farmington, MO and IL = 2008 population of 2.879 million in bi-state region, 2,185,926 million in MO ]
- **Core-based statistical areas (CBSAs)** [Saint Louis, MO-IL MSA = 2008 population 2,816,710 million in bi-state, 2,122,712 million in MO]
- **Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs):** Greater Saint Louis area (same as above)
- **Micropolitan Statistical Areas (mSAs)** [e.g., Farmington, MO]

These four categories are based on population size, plus commuting and employment ties of adjacent areas with a "high degree of social and economic integration." See [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg\\_ma1998](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_ma1998)

The Census Bureau relies upon the state definition of political subdivisions in its Census of Governments (done every 5 years, in years ending in 2 and 7 - therefore, next one will be conducted in 2012). <http://www.census.gov/govs/go/>

## Appendix B: Planning Committee Members and Attendees

**Name**

**Function**

**Year Established**

**Service Area**

### **Metropolitan Sewer District**

Storm water and wastewater collection & treatment

1954; expanded 1977

Saint Louis City and County

### **Saint Louis Community College district**

Community colleges, multiple campuses

1962

Saint Louis City and County

### **Regional Arts Commission**

Funding and promotion of arts and cultural organizations

1985

Saint Louis City and County

### **Saint Louis Zoo-Museum District**

Zoological Park, Art Museum, Science Center; Botanical Garden & History Museum

1971 Expanded 1983, 1985

Saint Louis City and County

**Metro transit Agency (formerly Bi-State Development Agency)**

Public transit

Established by interstate compact in 1949, approved by Congress

Bi-state region, Missouri and Illinois, including 200 municipalities

**East-West Gateway Council of Governments (formerly East-West Gateway Coordinating Council)**

Regional planning, transportation planning for federal funds

Established 1965

Bi-state region, Missouri and Illinois

**Appendix D: Three Examples of Large-scale Regional Approaches to City-County Consolidation**

**Region**

**Year**

**Consolidation Strategy**

**Results**

**Indianapolis, IN**

1970

Act of the state legislature

Uni-gov, consolidated city-county government has spurred economic development, tourism and conventions; population is now reported for city of Indianapolis and the balance of the county.

Consolidation did not include schools or police. Engaged suburban leadership without diluting minority leadership.

**Louisville, KY**

2003

City of Louisville and Jefferson County merged. All pre-merger cities retain identity but all participate in county-wide Louisville Metro Council.

Businesses pressed for this to occur because Lexington was overtaking Louisville as Kentucky's largest city.

**Jacksonville, FL**

1968

Jacksonville consolidated with Duval County.

After several failed annexation attempts, the city and county consolidated, making Jacksonville the 13th largest city in U.S.

**Appendix E: Regional and National Population Trends: US Census Bureau**

<b>City/Region</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2009-2010</b>	<b>2009 U.S. Rank</b>
Saint Louis City	452,801	396,685	348,189	356,587	52nd
Saint Louis County	973,896	993,529	1,016,315	992,408	
Saint Louis Region				2,825,769	18th
Kansas City	448,159	435,146	441,545	482,228	35th
Jackson County				705,708	
Kansas City Region				2,066,732	29th
Indianapolis	700,807	781,870	781,926	807,640	14th
Marion County				890,879	
Indianapolis Region				1,743,658	34th
Louisville	298,451	269,063	256,231	566,503	29th
Jefferson County				721,594	
Louisville Region				1,258,577	42nd
Jacksonville	540,920	635,230	735,503	813,518	13th
Duval County				857,040	
JAX Region				1,328,144	40th
Baltimore, MD				637,418	21st
Baltimore County				789,814	
Metro Region				2,690,886	20th

## **Appendix F: Recommended Subcommittee Structure, Speakers Bureau**

Legal

Businesses:

- Hotel Group
- Sports/Entertainment
- Construction
- Real Estate
- Transportation

Churches

Disabilities Community

Education Community

- Historians
- Schools
- Colleges & Universities

Medical Community

Municipalities

## **Appendix G: Saint Louis' Top Ten World-class Features**

The Gateway Arch and the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial

Saint Louis Symphony

Saint Louis Zoo

Washington University and BJS-Washington University Medical Complex

Missouri Botanical Gardens

Forest Park with Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis Science Center, Muny Opera and Jefferson Memorial

Anheuser-Busch/InBev Brewery

Boeing

Lambert Saint Louis International Airport

The Great Confluence of Mississippi and Missouri Rivers

## **Appendix H: FAQ's What would and would NOT happen if the City of Saint Louis were to re-enter Saint Louis County?**

### **1. What would happen to other cities in Saint Louis County?**

Nothing would happen to the other 91 municipalities in Saint Louis County. They would continue to exist as they do now. Their population would not be affected. There would be a lowering of taxes due to the addition of Saint Louis City's property assessments to the county tax base. The City of Saint Louis would enter Saint Louis County as the 92nd municipality.

### **2. What would happen to my local school district?**

Nothing would happen to the local school districts in Saint Louis County based on this proposal. School districts are not included in the proposal in any way.

### **3. What would happen to my local police and fire department?**

Nothing would happen to any of the local police and fire departments that exist now. Some of them already have cooperative agreements to help each other. These cooperative agreements also would not be affected. Some of the County municipalities contract with Saint Louis County to provide police services; this too would not be affected.

### **4. What would happen to the county offices in the City?**

Because Saint Louis city is its own county, it has eight county offices;; sheriff, assessor, etc. There would need to be some consideration given to these offices. For example, these offices could be deputized under the same office in Saint Louis County (e.g., a deputy assessor for Saint Louis city operating under the aegis of the County Assessor's office). These offices would no longer be elected. The combining of these offices under the Saint Louis County government would result in savings.

### **5. Other than the county offices mentioned above, are there other services that Saint Louis County would take over for the City of Saint Louis?**

After analyzing the services and costs, it may make sense for some services to be combined or to continue cooperative relationships that now exist. Parks and recreation services are one example; there might be both savings and increased availability of services if there could be some combining of services. However, this would only happen after the re-entry. Some municipalities within Saint Louis County already have informal agreements in the area of parks and recreation facilities now.

### **6. Would Saint Louis County be taking on the debts of the City of Saint Louis?**

Saint Louis County would not be taking on the debts of the City of Saint Louis, any more than they now take on the debt of the other 91 municipalities.

### **7. What County-wide services would be available to the City of Saint Louis?**

Some health services and maintenance of county roads would be handled by Saint Louis County.