

July 11, 2024

The Honorable Megan E. Green
President, St. Louis Board of Aldermen
City Hall, Room 230
1200 Market Street
St. Louis, Missouri 63103

The Honorable Alisha Sonnier
Chair, Committee of the Whole
City Hall, Room 230
1200 Market Street
St. Louis, Missouri 63103

Dear President Green and Alderwoman Sonnier:

On behalf of Greater St. Louis, Inc., I write to thank you for your ongoing service to the City of St. Louis and for leading community discussions about the use of the Rams Settlement Funds. Investment of the Rams Settlement Funds is among the most consequential decisions currently facing City leaders. We agree with you that these funds must be invested to achieve “equitable and innovative solutions to our city’s biggest problems.”¹

I write to you today to express our deep concern that the Board of Aldermen Committee of the Whole is concluding its public hearings on the Rams Settlement Funds without conducting a hearing on one of the six ideas selected as priorities by the people of St. Louis: *Improving Downtown Street & Sidewalk Infrastructure*.

On behalf of stakeholders in Downtown St. Louis and throughout the City, we respectfully request that the Committee of the Whole promptly schedule a public hearing to discuss *Improving Downtown Street & Sidewalk Infrastructure*, as it has on every other top priority selected by the public. The needs and concerns of Downtown St. Louis and other neighborhoods cannot be excluded from this process because of an arbitrary and inequitable decision that deviates from the Board’s publicly announced engagement process.

The Engagement Process

Last summer, the Board of Aldermen announced a detailed public engagement process that would solicit investment ideas from the public, narrow that pool of ideas to a set of top priorities through a public voting process, and then conduct public hearings to “hear from residents, community leaders and elected officials” about those top priorities.² The public voting process yielded six “priority ideas” for the Board to “prioritize for deeper vetting and highlight during public hearings” to be conducted as a Committee of the Whole.³ This phase of public engagement was to last from February 4, 2024, through August 31, 2024.⁴

¹ [Board of Aldermen Announces First Steps in the Public Engagement Process for Use of Rams Settlement](#), August 15, 2023

² [Board of Aldermen Announces First Steps in the Public Engagement Process for Use of Rams Settlement](#), August 15, 2023

³ [Voting on Ideas: Prioritizing Ideas for Consideration](#)

⁴ [Voting on Ideas: Prioritizing Ideas for Consideration](#)

The six “priority ideas” identified by St. Louis residents and to be discussed in public hearings were:

1. *Replacement of Water Mains*
2. *Increase Wages or Salaries for City Employees*
3. *Establish a Revolving Loan Fund*
4. *Free or Municipally Subsidized Child Care for Residents*
5. *Traffic Calming and Pedestrian-Friendly Street Design*
6. *Improve Downtown Street & Sidewalk Infrastructure*

Pursuant to the engagement process laid out by the Board, the Committee of the Whole has conducted three public hearings, addressing five of the six priority ideas:

May 7, 2024	<i>Replacement of Water Mains</i>
June 4, 2024	<i>Increase Wages or Salaries for City Employees & Establish a Revolving Loan Fund</i>
July 9, 2024	<i>Free or Municipally Subsidized Child Care for Residents & Traffic Calming and Pedestrian-Friendly Street Design</i>

At the July 9 meeting, Chairwoman Sonnier announced that this would be the Committee of the Whole’s final public hearing to take testimony on priority ideas. President Green’s policy director showed a slide that listed only five of the six priority ideas selected by the public and listed as “under consideration” on the public engagement portal. The slide omitted *Improve Downtown Street & Sidewalk Infrastructure*. A picture of this slide is attached at **Appendix A**.

The Chairwoman appears to be ending this phase of the engagement process summarily, arbitrarily, and unfairly without hearing from “residents, community leaders and elected officials” about the critical needs and concerns related to Downtown.

This is an unjust violation of the Committee’s purpose and publicly announced procedure that ignores the needs of Downtown as well as disinvested neighborhoods in North and Southeast St. Louis.

The Downtown Proposal

The *Improve Downtown Street & Sidewalk Infrastructure* priority idea was an amalgamation, created by the engagement portal administrator, of several proposals related to the needs of Downtown and other neighborhoods in St. Louis. Specifically, one of the proposals that received the highest number of votes on the engagement portal was titled *Crucial Investments in Downtown + Disinvested Neighborhoods*. Greater St. Louis, Inc., initially authored and submitted this proposal. A fact sheet on this proposal is included at **Appendix B**.

As detailed in the *Crucial Investments in Downtown + Disinvested Neighborhoods* proposal, Downtown, North St. Louis, and other disinvested neighborhoods throughout the City have a substantial material need for infrastructure investment. Investing in Downtown, North St. Louis, and disinvested neighborhoods simultaneously is a way to leverage to achieve a “2 + 2 = 5” effect. A City that is more walkable, bikeable, transit friendly, and beautiful makes it easier to attract new residential and commercial investment and to create retail and restaurant amenities. More development means more jobs for residents of North St. Louis, Southeast St. Louis, Downtown, and the entire City.

As a reminder, Downtown generates more than \$102 million in General Fund revenues annually, or more than 19 percent of citywide revenue. In contrast, the City allocates less than five percent of General Fund expenditures Downtown – despite the fact that more than one-third of the City’s private-sector jobs are located Downtown.⁵

Request for Public Hearing on Downtown Proposal

The people of St. Louis voted to select six top priorities for potential investment of the Rams Settlement Funds. The Committee of the Whole pledged to hold public hearings on the top proposals and lists the Downtown proposal as “under consideration” in its public-facing online portal.⁶ Excluding one of the top proposals identified by the people of St. Louis is arbitrary, unfair, and unacceptable. We would like to believe that this was an oversight and not an intentional decision to pass over Downtown and our City’s disinvested neighborhoods.

Therefore, we respectfully request that the Committee schedule a hearing to hear the concerns of stakeholders in Downtown, North St. Louis, and Southeast St. Louis who would benefit from this proposal. Greater St. Louis, Inc., would gladly testify at such a hearing along with other members of the community. We look forward to partnering with you on this important community idea that will benefit businesses, workers, residents, and visitors in the City of St. Louis. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Samuel Murphey
Chief Strategy Officer

⁵ Downtown St. Louis Fiscal Impact Report, July 2022

⁶ Voting on Ideas: Prioritizing Ideas for Consideration

CC:

The Honorable Anne Schweitzer, Alderwoman, Ward 1
The Honorable Tom Oldenburg, Alderman, Ward 2
The Honorable Shane Cohn, Alderman, Ward 3
The Honorable Bret Narayan, Alderman, Ward 4
The Honorable Joseph Vollmer, Alderman, Ward 5
The Honorable Daniela Velázquez, Alderwoman, Ward 6
The Honorable Cara Spencer, Alderwoman, Ward 8
The Honorable Michael Browning, Alderman, Ward 9
The Honorable Shameem Clark-Hubbard, Alderwoman, Ward 10
The Honorable Laura Keys, Alderwoman, Ward 11
The Honorable Sharon Tyus, Alderwoman, Ward 12
The Honorable Pamela Boyd, Alderwoman, Ward 13
The Honorable Rasheen Aldridge, Alderman, Ward 14

**Appendix A:
Slide Shown at July 9, 2024 Committee of the Whole Public Hearing**

Voting Results:

The Board of Aldermen shall hold hearings to discuss...

- ✓ 1. Replacement of Water Mains
- 2. **Traffic Calming and Pedestrian Friendly Street Design**
- ✓ 3. Increase Wages or Salaries for City Employees
- 4. **Free or Subsidized Child Care for Residents**
- ✓ 5. Redevelopment Revolving Loan Fund

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Appendix B:
Fact Sheet on *Crucial Investments in Downtown + Disinvested Neighborhoods*

ISSUE PAPER

INVESTMENT IN DOWNTOWN AND
DISINVESTED NEIGHBORHOODS
IS CRUCIAL FOR GROWTH IN
THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS

GREATER
ST. LOUIS INC.

GREATERSTLINC.COM

TOPLINE

Investing in Downtown and disinvested neighborhoods is one of the best economic decisions the City can make with THE RAMS' SETTLEMENT FUNDS

RAMS LAWSUIT
SETTLEMENT

- Downtown is the economic engine of the City and the entire metro region.
- The Rams' departure and the pandemic disproportionately impacted Downtown, its businesses, and its residents.
- A transformative infrastructure investment in Downtown will make our City safer and attract more investment, new jobs, and new residents.
- The City must simultaneously make transformational investments in neighborhoods experiencing disinvestment, especially North St. Louis. Reestablishing the connection between St. Louis' largest commercial and employment center and its neighborhoods is essential to the rejuvenation and growth of St. Louis.

Downtown generates 20% of the City's general revenue but RECEIVES ONLY 5% OF TOTAL CITYWIDE EXPENDITURES.

The City has approximately 24,000 VACANT PROPERTIES, most of which can be found in the north and southeast portions of the City.

While the Central corridor & South St. Louis have shown population growth in recent years, NORTH ST. LOUIS HAS SHOWN A SUSTAINED DECLINE IN POPULATION over the past 25 years.

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OPPORTUNITY

The Rams' Settlement funds should be used for transformational purposes that are intentional, strategic, and focused on inclusive and catalytic growth. Deferred maintenance and lack of strategic investment has led to the neglect of the key engine of our regional economy – Downtown – and the neglect of our neighborhoods that once provided a pipeline to employment. It is vital that the City invest significant resources in Downtown and its neglected neighborhoods to attract and retain residents and businesses.

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SOLUTION

Support a \$200 million investment targeted at infrastructure improvements, blight reduction, and high-quality housing in Downtown and disinvested neighborhoods throughout the City of St. Louis via the Rams' Settlement funds. This is the most strategic economic decision the City can make to address St. Louis' current challenges while preparing for future opportunities that will rejuvenate and transform the City of St. Louis.

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