



CITY OF ST. LOUIS
**PLANNING & URBAN
DESIGN AGENCY**

FRANCIS G. SLAY, Mayor

File No. PDA-071-16-RDX

To: City of St. Louis Planning Commission

From: Don Roe, Director

Subject: Chapter 353 Blighting
(*Proposed St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Area*)

Date: September 2, 2016

Summary

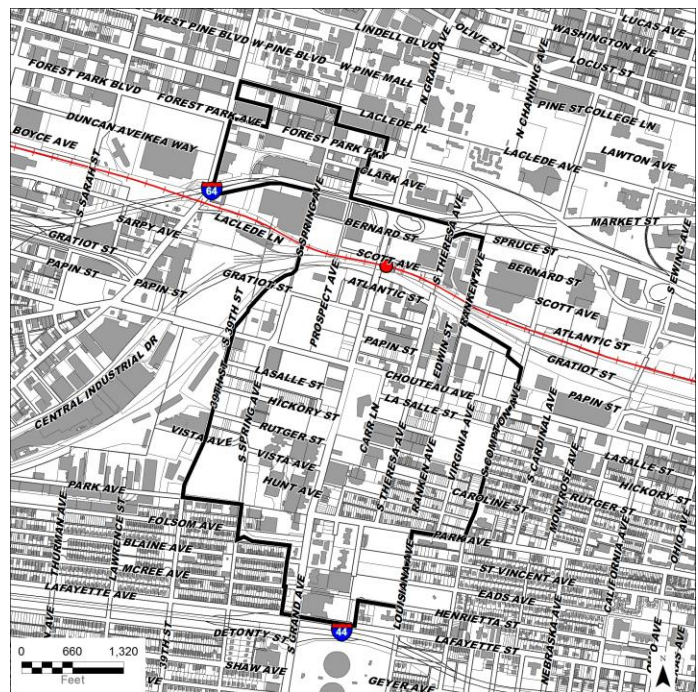
Submittal: Blighting study proposing to declare an area to be blighted under Chapter 353 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri and under Chapter 11.06 of the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis for Planning Commission review and recommendation.

Site: The area -- proposed to be called the St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Area -- is an approximately 395-acre site -- generally bounded by Laclede Ave. and Interstate 64 on the north, Compton Ave. on the east, Park Ave. and Interstate 44 on the south, and 39th St. and Vandeventer Ave. on the west -- located in the Midtown, The Gate District and Tiffany neighborhoods. It includes 610 parcels.

Existing Uses: The area includes a wide variety of land uses, including vacant land, institutional, industrial, commercial and residential.

Existing Building Conditions: A majority of the existing buildings were evaluated as requiring either major or moderate repair, and a significant number of the buildings are vacant structures.

Background: A Blighting Study prepared by Development Strategies was submitted to the Planning Commission for its study and recommendation as to whether the area should be declared a "blighted area". Following the site's blighting by ordinance, a proposed Redevelopment Plan outlining the site's proposed use and development is expected to be submitted to the Planning Commission for its review and recommendation. This proposed Redevelopment Plan would be reviewed by the Planning Commission at a future meeting and would need to be approved by ordinance. The Redevelopment Plan is expected to be submitted by a Redevelopment Corporation affiliated with Saint Louis University, which owns a significant number of parcels in the Redevelopment Area.



Determination: The Planning Commission's recommendation must indicate if the area is a "blighted area", as defined in Sections 11.06.010 and 11.06.020 of the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis and Section 353.020 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri, 2000, and in accordance with the procedures contained in Chapter 11.06 of the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis and Chapter 353 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri, 2000.

Recommended Action

That the Planning Commission recommends to the Board of Aldermen that the area, as defined in the attached legal description (Exhibit "A"), be declared blighted by determining that the area is blighted, as defined in Sections 11.06.010 and 11.06.020 of the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis and Section 353.020 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri, 2000, and is necessary and in the public interest.

1.0 Background

Determination

A Blighting Study prepared by Development Strategies was submitted to the Planning Commission for its study and recommendation as to whether a site should be declared a "blighted area" under Chapter 353 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri and under Chapter 11.06 of the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis. The Planning Commission is required to make a recommendation as to whether the area, as defined in the legal description in Exhibit "A" and shown on the map in Exhibit "B", should be declared a "blighted area". Subsequently, the area proposed to be named the St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Area will be available to developer(s) for redevelopment under Chapter 353. The Blighting Study, "Data and Analysis of Conditions Representing a 'Blighted Area' for the St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Area", dated August 23, 2016, was prepared by Development Strategies, a St. Louis-based consulting firm, and is attached hereto as Exhibit "D". Additionally, PDA staff has reviewed the Blighting Study and has conducted its own research and verification of conditions in the area.

The recommendation of the Planning Commission shall be guided by definitions in Section 11.06.020 of the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis and Section 353.020 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri, 2000. The following definitions of "area" and "blighted area" -- which are very similar between the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis and the Revised Statutes of Missouri -- apply to this task:

Section 11.06.020, Subsections A and B of the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis reads as follows:

A. "Area" means that portion of the City which the legislative authority of the City has found or shall find to be blighted, so that the clearance, replanning, rehabilitation, or reconstruction thereof is necessary to effectuate the purposes of this law. Any such area may include buildings or improvements not in themselves blighted, and any real property whether improved or unimproved, the inclusion of which is deemed necessary for the effective clearance, replanning, reconstruction or rehabilitation of the area of which such buildings, improvements or real property form a part;

B. "Blighted Area" means that portion of the City which the Board of Aldermen determines that by reason of age, obsolescence, inadequate or outmoded design or physical deterioration, existing properties and improvements, have become economic and social liabilities, and that such conditions are conducive to ill health, transmission of disease, crime or inability to pay reasonable taxes;

Section 353.020, Subsections (1) and (2) of the Revised Statutes of Missouri, 2000 reads as follows:

(1) "Area", that portion of the city which the legislative authority of such city has found or shall find to be blighted so that the clearance, replanning, rehabilitation, or reconstruction thereof is necessary to effectuate the

purposes of this law. Any such area may include buildings or improvements not in themselves blighted, and any real property, whether improved or unimproved, the inclusion of which is deemed necessary for the effective clearance, replanning, reconstruction or rehabilitation of the area of which such buildings, improvements or real property form a part;

(2) "Blighted area", that portion of the city within which the legislative authority of such city determines that by reason of age, obsolescence, inadequate or outmoded design or physical deterioration have become economic and social liabilities, and that such conditions are conducive to ill health, transmission of disease, crime or inability to pay reasonable taxes;

Site

The proposed St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Area includes approximately 395 acres (including public rights-of-way). The site is generally bounded by Laclede Ave. and Interstate 64 on the north, Compton Ave. on the east, Park Ave. and Interstate 44 on the south, and 39th St. and Vandeventer Ave. on the west -- located in the Midtown, The Gate District and Tiffany neighborhoods. The Redevelopment Area's 610 parcels include approximately 324 acres (excluding public rights-of-way). A legal description of the proposed Redevelopment Area is included as Exhibit "A", while a map of the proposed Redevelopment Area is included as Exhibit "B".

The area includes a wide variety of land uses, including vacant land, institutional, industrial, commercial and residential. Vacant land makes up about 23% of the area. Institutional uses -- most of which are associated with Saint Louis University -- make up about 22% of the area. Industrial uses -- many of which include large buildings and have a very high vacancy rate -- make up about 16% of the area.

A majority of the area's existing 191 buildings were evaluated as requiring either major repair (21%) or moderate repair (40%), and a significant number of the buildings are vacant structures.

Summary of Blighting Study

As stated previously, a Blighting Study was prepared by Development Strategies, Inc., a St. Louis-based consulting firm. The firm promotes its consulting expertise as "guiding effective decisions in real estate, community, and economic development" and has conducted many blighting studies in St. Louis -- including Loughborough Commons, McRee Town, CORTEX, and the proposed NGA facility on the City's Near North Side. The Blighting Study, "Data and Analysis of Conditions Representing a 'Blighted Area' for the St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Area", dated August 23 2016, is attached as Exhibit "D". The document includes extensive research on the proposed Redevelopment Area, including a table listing the physical condition, land use, owner and additional information for every parcel in the area. Based on its research, Development Strategies states that the proposed Redevelopment Area is clearly "blighted" and cites the following factors in reaching this determination:

Age of Existing Buildings

The stock of buildings in the Redevelopment Area is aging. Over 40% of the buildings in the Redevelopment Area were constructed over 100 years ago, 72% are at least 50 years old, and 80% were constructed more than 35 years ago, which is generally used as a criteria for identifying older buildings that are likely to experience electrical and mechanical problems, as well as a tendency for gradual overall deterioration, unless they are very well maintained and updated regularly. This is clearly the case in the Area.

Obsolescence

Development in the majority of the Redevelopment Area was determined to be obsolete because:

- *Excessive vacancy of nearly 50% of manufacturing/warehouse development and nearly 22% of all commercial development.*
- *Over 40% of all parcels in the Redevelopment Area are vacant or contain vacant buildings, and therefore are no longer supporting viable development.*
- *Obsolete infrastructure does not support modern residential or commercial development.*

Inadequate or Outmoded Design

Much of the existing public infrastructure and private development in the Redevelopment Area is inadequate or outmoded as represented by:

- *The functionally outmoded and inadequate street system which inhibits needed modern redevelopment, internal circulation, and is frequented by streets that dead-end or have been vacated without adequate space for cars or emergency vehicles to turn around.*
- *Missing or inadequate sidewalks and curb cuts that inhibit pedestrian circulation, particularly for disabled individuals, and are not in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Nearly a quarter of all street rights-of-way in the Redevelopment Area have no sidewalks. Where sidewalks are provided, nearly 40% do not meet ADA requirements.*
- *Nearly 40% of all non-residential buildings in the Redevelopment Area are in non-compliance with ADA requirements for building accessibility.*

Physical Deterioration

As identified by the field study conducted by Development Strategies, there is physical deterioration throughout the Redevelopment Area as illustrated by:

- *Of the Redevelopment Area's 199 buildings, 61% were found to require either "major" (21%) or "moderate" (40%) repairs, meaning they exhibit various levels of physical deterioration that contribute to the blighting conditions in the Area.*
- *Nearly six of ten streets are classified as being in either "poor" condition (34%) or "fair" condition (24%).*
- *Where sidewalks are provided, almost four in ten are classified as being in "poor" (23%) or "fair" (15%) condition.*
- *The site conditions (private sidewalks, parking areas, fencing, landscaped areas, etc.) of the vast majority of the parcels are classified as being in "poor" condition (22%) or "fair" condition (49%).*

Economic Liability

As a result of the previously mentioned blighting factors, the Redevelopment Area is an economic liability as reflected by:

- *The underutilization of the Redevelopment Area given its prime location along Grand Boulevard between the Interstate 44 and Interstate 64/US 40 interchanges, the lack of development associated with the Grand Boulevard MetroLink station, and its adjacency to Cortex and Saint Louis University's North Campus.*
- *The existing vacancy of properties in the Redevelopment Area, which inhibits new investment and creates a burden on the City.*

Social Liability

The blighting factors also create a social liability due to:

- *The drain on existing city resources and the inability to generate financial resources for city services.*
- *Extensive lack of ADA compliance with respect to buildings and sidewalks.*
- *Hazardous conditions resulting from dead-end or vacated streets without adequate turning space for emergency vehicles.*
- *Increased risk of fires as a result of excessive vacancy.*

Conditions Conducive to Ill Health, Transmission of Disease, Crime

- *Likelihood of asbestos and/or lead-based paint contamination, given that 80% of structures were built prior to 1980.*
- *Known environmental contamination of Federal Mogul property and probability that other manufacturing/warehouse uses have contamination.*
- *The blighting factors also foster crime due to the excessive vacancy of buildings and land.*

Inability to Pay Reasonable Taxes

The Redevelopment Area has failed to attract new investment and sufficient reinvestment in existing buildings and infrastructure, and much of the existing development is outdated and obsolete. As a result, the City has not been able to capitalize on the Area's location along the Grand Boulevard corridor to generate needed taxes to provide city services to residents. Between 2011 and 2016 the taxable assessed value of property in the Redevelopment Area declined by 32% while the total assessed value for the City of St. Louis increased by .6% during this same period.

FINDING OF BLIGHT

As summarized above and discussed in detail in the balance of this report, the data overwhelmingly demonstrates that conditions in the Redevelopment Area are above the established threshold standards for blight under Chapter 353. The data supports a finding that the Redevelopment Area is blighted by reason of age, obsolescence, inadequate or outmoded design or physical deterioration, has become an economic and social liability, and that such conditions are conducive to ill health, transmission of disease, crime or inability to pay reasonable taxes. The depth and long-term nature of conditions require effective public intervention through state-enabled redevelopment powers to reverse the negative course of economic, social and physical decline that is documented here.

Appendix C provides a summary of a number of blighting factors on a parcel-by-parcel basis. A predominance of the parcels (71%) and acreage (64%) in the Redevelopment Area are impacted by at least one blighting factor, and 30% of the parcels and 30% of the acreage are impacted by multiple blighting factors.

It is also important to note that in addition to the parcel-by-parcel blighting factors, the extensive deteriorated condition of public rights-of-way, the lack of ADA compliant sidewalks and curb cuts, and the inadequate vehicular circulation system, also negatively impacts a majority of the Redevelopment Area.

Looking beyond the individual factors of blight described here, it is important to understand the collective impact of these factors. The Redevelopment Area is clearly not contributing to the economic and social welfare of the City and its residents. It is an area of extensive economic underutilization, particularly given its potential

to capitalize on the considerable benefits of its location along heavily traveled Grand Boulevard between I-64/US 40 and I-44.

2.0 Comments

Staff of the Planning and Urban Design Agency has reviewed the above-referenced conclusions drawn by Development Strategies and concurs with the overall conclusions of the report based on staff's knowledge of the proposed Redevelopment Area and the methodologies used by Development Strategies.

In addition to reviewing the Blighting Study, staff conducted its own research and verification of conditions in the area. This took the form of conducting a "windshield survey" of the area -- with a focus on the physical condition of parcels and the buildings and parking lots. Photos of many parcels were taken -- a few representative examples are included in Exhibit "C" -- and will be presented at the September 7, 2016 Planning Commission meeting.

The City's Strategic Land Use Plan designates the majority of the Redevelopment Area as an Institutional Preservation and Development Area (IPDA). It also has large concentrations of Specialty Mixed Use Area (SMUA) and Opportunity Area (OA). The IPDA Strategic Land Use Category is defined as: *"Areas where significant nodes of educational, medical, religious or other institutional uses currently exist and are appropriately situated, as well as areas for expansion of such institutional uses. These large-scale institutional centers are intended to positively influence the enhancement of surrounding areas."*

It should be noted, however, that the proposed blighting designation doesn't affect land use. Thus, the Planning Commission only needs to determine whether the area is blighted -- not a determination regarding conformity with the City's Strategic Land Use Plan. However, such a determination will be made when a proposed Redevelopment Plan outlining the site's proposed land use and redevelopment is submitted to the Planning Commission for its review.



Strategic Land Use Categories	
Neighborhood Preservation Area	Business/Industrial Preservation Area
Neighborhood Development Area	Business/Industrial Development Area
Neighborhood Commercial Area	Institutional Preservation and Development Area
Regional Commercial Area	Specialty Mixed Use Area
Recreational and Open Space Preservation	Opportunity Area

2.1 Public Input

The Board of Aldermen will conduct a public hearing as part of the legislative process.

2.2 Previous Commission Action

Several rezonings and Blighting Studies and Redevelopment Plans in the area were reviewed by the Planning Commission. One of the more prominent reviews was of a proposed blighting of the proposed Cortex East Redevelopment Area, a 73-acre site centered at the intersection of Grand Blvd. and Chouteau Ave. The Planning Commission recommended approval of the blighting at its July 6, 2005 meeting.

2.3 Requested Action

Chapter 11.06 of the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis requires the Planning Commission (as successor to the Community Development Commission) to transmit its recommendations to the Board of Alderman either in advance of the introduction of a proposed ordinance regarding the proposed blighting of an area or after a proposed ordinance has been referred to the Planning Commission by the Clerk of the Board of Aldermen.

Section 11.06.050 specifically states: *“Provided that any recommendation to declare the area blighted shall contain a determination that the area is blighted as defined by Section 11.06.020 and redevelopment of the area under Chapter 353 of the Missouri Revised Statutes, 1949, as amended, and this chapter is necessary and in the public interest.”*

Requested Recommendation

That the Planning Commission recommends to the Board of Aldermen that the area, as defined in the attached legal description (Exhibit “A”), be declared blighted by determining that the area is blighted, as defined in Sections 11.06.010 and 11.06.020 of the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis and Section 353.020 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri, 2000, and is necessary and in the public interest.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS PLANNING COMMISSION AS FOLLOWS:

1. The area described in Exhibit “A” is a blighted area in accordance with the definitions in Section 11.06.020, Subsections A and B of the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis and Section 353.020, Subsections (1) and (2) of the Revised Statutes of Missouri, 2000.
2. The area described in Exhibit “A” is recommended for redevelopment under Chapter 353 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri, 2000 and Chapter 11.06 of the Revised Code of the City of St. Louis and is necessary and in the public interest.
3. The Director of the Planning and Urban Design Agency is hereby authorized and directed to notify the Board of Aldermen of its recommendation.

EXHIBIT A

Legal Description

A tract of land located in the City of St. Louis, Missouri, being all or portions of City Blocks 1278.01, 1278.02, 1279, 1280, 1281, 1284, 1285, 1289, 1290, 1825, 1826, 1827, 1828, 1829, 2122.05, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2157.05, 2157.06, 2158, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, , 2180, 2181.05, 2181.06, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185.01, 2185.02, 2185.11, 2187.03, 2188, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2206.22, 2208, 2209, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2231, 2233.18, 2234.18, 3918.03, 3919.03, 3932, 3933, 3934, 3935, 3936, 3937, 3938, 4958, 6504 and specifically described as follows:

Beginning at a point which is the intersection of the eastern right-of-way line of s. Vandeventer Avenue and Laclede Avenue thence east along the centerline of Laclede Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of S. Spring Avenue, thence south along the centerline of S. Spring Avenue to the western extension of the centerline of the east-west alley in City Blocks 2202 and 2203, thence along the centerline of the alley to its intersection with the northern extension of the eastern property line of parcel 220300070 located at 3631 Forest Park Avenue, thence south along the eastern property line and its extension to the intersection with the centerline of Forest Park Avenue, thence west along the centerline of Forest Park Avenue to its intersection with the northern extension of the eastern property line of parcel 650400010 located at 3644 Forest Park Avenue, thence south along the property line to intersection with the centerline of Clark Avenue, thence west along the centerline to its intersection with the centerline of Prospect Avenue, thence south along the centerline of Prospect Avenue and its extension to the centerline of eastbound I-64, thence east along the centerline of eastbound I-64 to its intersection with the northern extension of the centerline of S. Theresa Avenue, thence south along the extension and the centerline of S. Theresa Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Spruce Street, thence east along the centerline across Edwin Street to its intersection with the northern extension of eastern property line of Parcel 221500120 located at 400 Edwin Street, thence south along the property line continuing along the eastern property line of Parcel 221500150 located at 601 Edwin Street to its intersection with the northern property line of Parcel 221500010/221500030 located at 678 – 698 S. Theresa Avenue, thence east along the northern property line to its intersection with the eastern property line of Parcel 221500010/221500030, thence south along the eastern property line of Parcel 221500010/221500030, continuing south along the eastern property line of Parcel 221400110 located at 700 S. Theresa Avenue, continuing south along the eastern property line of Parcel 221400100 located at 708 S. Theresa Avenue, to its intersection with the northern property line of Parcel 221400120 located at Gratiot Street, thence continuing east across Ranken Avenue continuing along the northern property line of Parcel 223100080 located at 750 Ranken Avenue, continuing east along the northern property line of Parcel 223100070 located at 750 Virginia Avenue to its intersection with the eastern property line of Parcel 223100070, thence south along the eastern property line to its intersection with the northern property line of Parcel 223100060 located at 3201 Papin Street, thence east along the northern property line and its extension to its intersection with the centerline of S. Compton Avenue, thence south along the centerline past Chouteau Avenue, past Lasalle Street, past Rutger Street, past Caroline Street, Past Vista Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Park Avenue, thence west along the centerline of Park Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Louisiana

Avenue, thence south along the centerline of Louisiana Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Henrietta Street, thence west along the centerline to its intersection with the eastern property line of Parcel 128900025 located at 3501 Lafayette Avenue, thence south along the eastern property line and its extension to the centerline of Lafayette Avenue, thence west along the centerline of Lafayette Avenue across S. Grand Boulevard to its intersection with the extension of the western property line of Parcel 212205240 located at 1657 S. Grand Boulevard, continuing north along the western property line of Parcel 212205231 located at 1651 S. Grand Boulevard, continuing north along the western property line of Parcel 212205211 located at 1635 S. Grand Boulevard, continuing north along the western property line of Parcel 212205200 located at 3612 Mcree Avenue and its extension to the intersection with the centerline of Mcree Avenue, thence west along the centerline of Mcree Avenue to its intersection with the extension of the centerline of the north-south alley in City Block 2123, across Blaine Avenue and continuing along the centerline of Cardinal Glennon Way in City Block 2124 to its intersection with the extension of the southern property line of Parcel 212400220 located at 1537 S. Grand Boulevard, thence west along the southern property line of Parcel 212400220 to its intersection with the western property line of Parcel 212400220, thence north along the western property line of Parcel 212400220 and its extension to the intersection with the centerline of Park Avenue, thence west along the centerline to its intersection with the centerline of S. 39th Street, thence north along the centerline of S. 39th Street past Vista Avenue, past Rutger Street, past Hickory Street, past Lasalle Street to its intersection with the southern property line of Parcel 393400040 located at 3227 Chouteau Avenue, thence west along the southern property line to its intersection with the western property line of Parcel 393400040, thence north along the western property line continuing north along the western property line of Parcel 393300020 located at 3710 Gratiot Street to its intersection with the northern property line of Parcel 393300020, thence east along the northern property line of Parcel 393300020 to its intersection with the western property line of Parcel 393200020 located at 3707 Gratiot Street, thence north and east along the western property line and its extension to its intersection with the centerline of S. Spring Avenue, thence north along the centerline of S. Spring Avenue continuing along the western property line of Parcel 218511010 located at 500 S. Spring Avenue and continuing along the centerline of S. Spring Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Market Street, thence westward along the centerline of Market Street to its intersection with the eastern right-of-way line of Vandeventer Avenue, thence north along the eastern right-of-way line of Vandeventer Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Forest Park Avenue, thence east along the centerline to its intersection with the extension of the western property line of Parcel 391903350 located at 3813 Forest Park Avenue, thence north along the western property line and its extension to its intersection with the east-west alley in City Block 3919.03, thence west along the centerline of the alley and its extension to its intersection with the eastern right-of-way line of Vandeventer Avenue, thence north along the eastern right-of-way line of Vandeventer Avenue to its intersection with the centerline of Laclede Avenue, the point of beginning.

EXHIBIT B

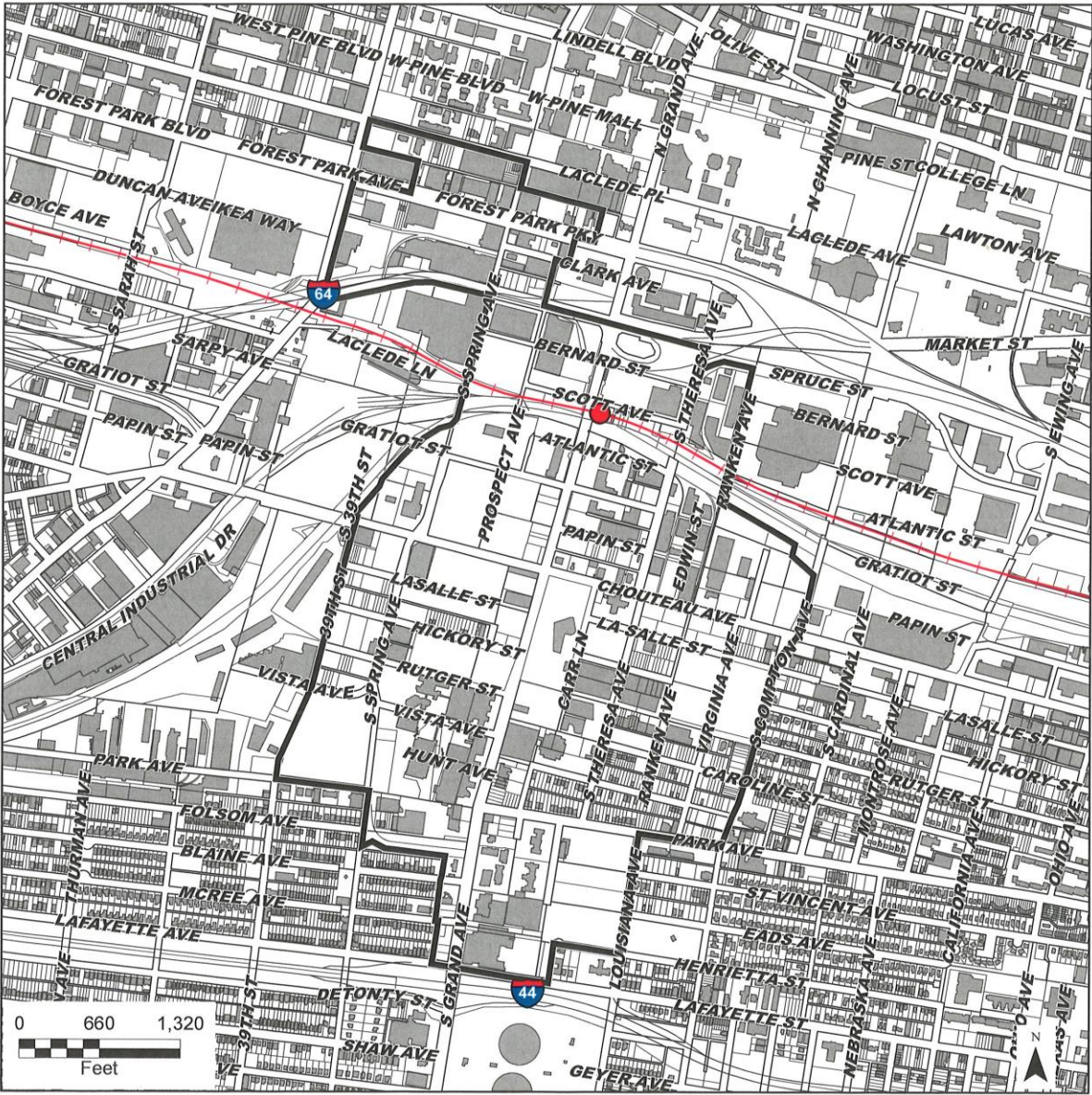


Exhibit “C”

Photos of Proposed St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Area



**1) Proposed Redevelopment Area
Vacant commercial building, 3802 Laclede Ave.
(Looking southwestward)**



**2) Proposed Redevelopment Area
Vacant Federal Mogul industrial complex,
3711-39 Market St.
(Looking southeastward)**



**3) Proposed Redevelopment Area
Vacant National Guard Armory, 3660 Market
St.
(Looking southeastward)**



**4) Proposed Redevelopment Area
Vacant industrial building, 801 Edwin St.
(Looking northwestward)**