St. Louis: Past, Present and Future

Interesting Historical Patterns

- St. Louis has continually struggled to become an economic force in the Midwest with very mixed results. Our start as a city was the result of our location on the Mississippi and the fur trade. Manufacturing replaced the lucrative fur trade in later years with results that were more like “shifting sands.”

- Historically the region has always struggled with its minorities. In the late 1840s, it became a destination for massive immigration by Irish immigrants fleeing the Great Famine, and Germans arriving after the Revolution in German states of 1848. Nativist sentiment increased in St. Louis during the late 1840s, leading to mob attacks and riots in 1844, 1849, and 1852.

- The worst nativist riot in St. Louis took place in 1854. The local militia was used to end the fighting. 10 people were killed, 33 wounded, and 93 Irish buildings and businesses were damaged. Regulations on elections prevented fighting in future elections in 1856 and 1858.

- St. Louis would maintain overt segregation policies until the 20th Century and less overt until the present day.

- The dedication to becoming a world-class city while also generating sufficient economic opportunity for its citizens has been a persistent preoccupation and struggle for our leaders. Attempts to secure world class status included the 1904 Worlds Fair and the 1904 Olympics with many other “initiatives” along the way.

Current demographics, economic and social factors

**2010 Census (Population)**

- St. Louis City 319,294
- St. Louis County 998,954

**Racial and Ethnic Composition**

- 75.1 White
- 18.1 Black
- 2.6 Hispanic
- 2.1 Asian
- 2.1 Other

**Slow Steady Population Growth**

**Not as Diverse—St. Louis is Bi-Racial City**
Population is More Dispersed

Aging Faster

Economic Vitality


Lower Earnings but also Low Cost of Living

Racial Disparity

- Among its peer regions, St. Louis is the 6th most segregated and tends to have a wider gap between whites and blacks than many of the peer regions on a range of social, economic and health indicators.

- The disparity in unemployment between blacks and whites in the St. Louis region is high, ranking 4th among the peer regions, with Blacks being 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed than whites. Blacks comprise 17 percent of the population in the labor force but about twice that, 34 percent, of those unemployed.

- The region ranks 18th with black adults being twice as likely to not have a high school education. Blacks are about half as likely as Whites in the region to have a bachelor’s degree or higher; 17 percent of black adults are college graduates, compared to 33 percent of White adults.

- Income and Poverty--In 2012 the median household income for white households in the St. Louis region was $59,000. For black households it was about half that amount, $30,500. This gap between blacks and whites puts the region in the top 10 of the 34 regions on this measure of disparity.

- On average for the peer regions, black families are 3.2 times more likely to be in poverty than white families. The difference in poverty rates between whites and blacks is one of the largest gaps among those reviewed. In the St Louis region, 9 percent of white families have income below the poverty level while about one-third of black families have income below the poverty threshold.

- The St. Louis region was found to have lower social mobility than many of its peers on three indicators of how likely a person born into a low-income family is to move up the economic ladder and achieve a higher standard of living as an adult. In St. Louis this low level of mobility affects black people to a greater extent since 30 percent of black individuals are in poverty (compared to 9 percent of whites), black household incomes are half that of whites and blacks have substantially less wealth than whites.
Alternate Realities

1. In St. Louis County 10.5% of businesses are black-owned, 3.6% are Asian owned, 1.1% Hispanic owned and 27% Women-Owned

2. 14.5% of seniors in the region live in poverty one of the lowest rates in 35 peer states.

3. 21% of St. Louis City businesses are black-owned, 5.1% Asian, 1.4% Hispanic and 28% Women-Owned.

4. Charmaine Chapman Leadership Society—Largest African American philanthropic organization in amount of donations and participation in the USA right here in St. Louis. (2.5 Million in 2014)

5. Church on the Northside received $425,000 donation from parishioner.

Important future trends

1. Economic Development agencies and the World Trade Center are focused on attracting more immigrants to the region.

2. The effort to create more equity in St. Louis will mean that funders put more teeth into their call for more diversity and cross-cultural engagement—particularly within the African American community.

3. More of our seniors will work longer than in prior years.

4. “Solos” will become an increasingly more important demographic.

5. Efforts to reduce poverty will focus on education, jobs and institutional racism.

6. There are approximately 7-10,000 college students in the region from foreign countries. This is expected to increase.

7. Labor force growth is not keeping up with demand such that a shortfall of some 265,000 workers is expected over the next 20 years

Sources
US Census 2010
East-West Gateway Coordinating Council—Where We Stand
St. Louis Public Radio- Population Shifts In St. Louis Continue Same Path
St. Louis Metromorphosis: Past Trends and Future Directions