

Studies conducted by numerous researchers have shown that in St. Louis, zip code is destiny. Members of Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice, who have benefitted from "having the door held open" for them, believe that changing the rules now in place could have positive consequences well beyond housing. Access to "communities of opportunity," such as the many suburbs in St. Louis, can result in increased college attendance and higher lifetime earnings for children. Affordable housing in diverse communities may be the best way to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and racial injustice.

*"Let's raise our children together:
let them ride the same school
buses, learn the same history,
swing in the same playgrounds,
pedal their bikes down the same
streets, share their same city.*

*Then we shall see face to face.
Hallelujah."*

— From "St. Louis: Prayer At Dawn,"
in *How To Love A Country* by Richard Blanco

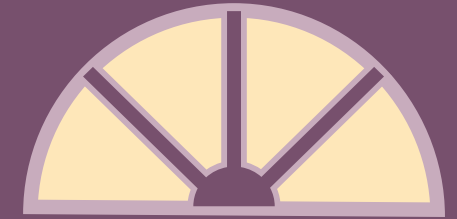


Women's Voices is a volunteer-driven progressive organization whose mission is to identify, research and discuss critical issues; to mobilize, energize and inspire themselves and others to action, and to work as individuals and in community for social justice.

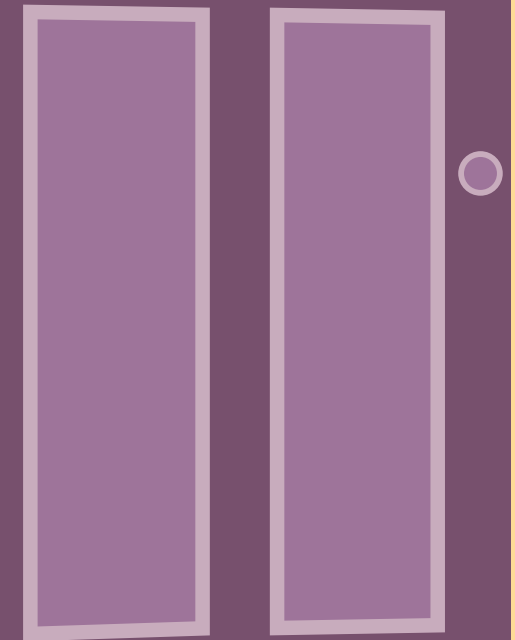
Please join us as we hold the door open.

For more information
www.womensvoicesraised.org

or email:
housingjustice@womensvoicesraised.org



Hold the Door Open
An affordable housing initiative



**Women's Voices Raised
for Social Justice**



Housing stability transforms lives.

Members of Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice believe that a safe, affordable, desirable place to live and raise a family is a moral imperative. Unfortunately, it is a goal that eludes too many in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

We also believe that communities are strengthened and enriched when a variety of people live in them. In the past, some school districts have worked hard to increase diversity in their classrooms. But diversity should not be solely the responsibility of schools. When we live, work, shop, play and worship with others, people who do not necessarily "look like us," we are realizing America's goal of inclusivity. We are creating welcoming communities where all of us have an opportunity to live, work, and grow together.

Affordable housing is the key to transforming lives and creating thriving communities.

Why do we have such a lack of affordable housing?

"We've created a system in which people are only granted as much dignity as they can afford," says Blake Strobe, executive director of Arch City Defenders. "We need to think critically and creatively about how to provide safe, decent, affordable housing to all residents, regardless of the profit motive that has driven decision-making here."

Here are some things to think about:

- How many units of housing in your community are designated "affordable"?
- How much multi-family housing is allowed in your community?
- What are your zoning laws? Do they mandate primarily large lots and single-family detached housing?
- If your community permits multi-family homes, do these require a public hearing?
- How often do you hear "Not In My Back Yard" (NIMBY) when alternative housing solutions are proposed? Have you ever thought, "Not In My Back Yard"?

Also consider whether the people who take care of you and your community can afford to live there:

- Is housing affordable for fire fighters and other civic employees?
- Can teachers and aides who work in your schools find nearby housing? What about nurses and home health care aides?
- Are there suitable housing options for grocery store workers, retail sales clerks, and those who are employed in non-professional jobs?

What could be done? What should be done?

Cities and towns across the country are beginning to grapple with the need to provide affordable housing. Here are some steps that have been taken:

St. Louis County and St. Louis City both have established Affordable Housing Trust Funds. When dedicated streams of funding are identified, these funds can provide resources for developers and others to build or renovate affordable homes.

In January, 2021, Kansas City passed an ordinance requiring multi-family projects seeking tax incentives to set aside at least 10 percent of those units for residents earning 70 percent or less of the area median income. Monthly rents will be \$1,000 or less. Another 10 percent of the units must be set aside for those earning 30 percent or less of the area median income, meaning rents would total between \$500-\$700 per month.

In July, 2019, Oregon ended single-family zoning in communities of more than 10,000 people, allowing duplexes or four-family buildings to be constructed anywhere.

Also in 2019, the Minneapolis City Council abolished single-family-home zoning, which means duplexes and triplexes can now be built anywhere in the city.

Many communities are considering a tax on high-end real estate transactions, with proceeds going to develop units for lower-income residents.

As the need for affordable housing continues to increase, a number of communities are looking at public-private partnerships that will combine public housing with market-rate housing.