

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

historic name Council Plaza

other name/site number Union Plaza, Council House West, Council House East

street & number 300 S. Grand Blvd., 212 S. Grand Blvd., 310 S. Grand Blvd. N/A not for publication

city or town St. Louis N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis [Independent City] code 510 zip code 63130

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles Jan 16, 2007
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

National Park Service Determination

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)
 private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)
 building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	1	structures
0	0	objects
5	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: professional
COMMERCE/TRADE: organizational
HEALTHCARE: clinic
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE: professional
COMMERCE/TRADE: organizational
HEALTHCARE: clinic
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT

foundation CONCRETE

walls CONCRETE
roof ASPHALT

other OTHER

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
SEE ATTACHED

Council Plaza
Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1964 - 1968

Significant Dates

1968

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Schwartz and Van Hoeffen

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering NPS Form 10-900

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Record #

Council Plaza
Name of Property

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property approximately nine acres

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 7/4/0/7/5/5 4/2/7/9/6/7/2
Zone Easting Northing

2 1/5 7/4/1/0/6/0 4/2/7/9/5/2/5
Zone Easting Northing

3 1/5 7/4/0/7/2/0 4/2/7/9/5/3/5
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Melinda Winchester

organization Lafser & Associates date _____

street & number 2285 County Road 316 telephone (573) 243-6965
city or town Jackson state MO zip code 63755

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the complete form:

Continuation Sheet

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Multiple Owners (see attached)

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town St. Louis state MO zip code 63130

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Council Plaza
St. Louis [Independent City], MO

Summary:

The Council Plaza District sits on a nine-acre site in the Mill Creek Valley of Midtown St. Louis on Grand Boulevard. The district is composed of two contributing buildings consisting of two steel-frame and pre-cast concrete with exposed aggregate high-rise buildings constructed in 1964 and 1968. The design has influences of international and modern styles with the large expanse of windows, flat roof tops, smooth wall surfaces and absence of much ornamentation. It also contains two 2-story buildings constructed in 1967-68 with a streamline design and horizontal bands of windows that wrap around all elevations. The second floor is cantilevered providing a covered walk area around the buildings. A glass and concrete service station was built on the west corner of the site and a small concrete and aggregate gazebo is located on the northeast corner of the complex. The complex is an early example of a publicly assisted housing project constructed specifically for the elderly in St. Louis. Designed by prominent architects Schwarz and Van Hoefen, it makes a significant contribution to the midtown area through its mass, height, and fenestration. The original design is intact and it continues to maintain architectural integrity through its historical character, function, setting and design.

Elaboration:

The Council Plaza Complex occupies a nine-acre site in the Midtown district of St. Louis located in the geographical center of the city of St. Louis consisting primarily of commercial and institutional buildings. The district is bounded on the west by South Grand, on the north and east by Forest Park Avenue and on the south by Interstate 64E. Early in the 20th century, this area was the city's theater district full of thriving and vibrant businesses and also a crossroads of its transit systems. Grand Boulevard contained several large commercial structures like the Metropolitan built in 1908 and the Humboldt located at the corner of Washington Street. Built in 1930, the largest historic office building in the district was the 23-story Continental Building. Directly to the south of Council Plaza on Grand Boulevard is St. Louis University which occupies a large portion of the Midtown area and consists of numerous high-style architectural designs. (See Site Plan, Figure One)

Mill Creek Valley, named for the small stream that once ran through it, was largely rural until about 1850. Much of the area was developed into some of the earliest platted subdivisions such as Highland, platted by John Shepley in 1848 and Stoddards's Addition platted by Henry Stoddard. Due to rapid growth of the city these soon became a part of St. Louis in 1855 when the city limits extended west of Grand Avenue. (See Figure Two, Industrial Area #2) Between 1880 and 1900, Grand Boulevard soon began to grow as a commercial area influenced by the university which was constructed in 1888 and has been a stabilizing foundation for the Midtown area.

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Council Plaza
St. Louis [Independent City], MO

Setting-

The setting and design of Council Plaza emphasize an artistic cultural theme throughout the complex with a combination of exterior artworks not only in the landscaping but also in the exterior façade of Tower East. Sculptures and artwork also adorn the interior common areas of the Labor Health Institute, Tower West and the Executive office building of the Labor Union. A large rectangular asphalt parking area is located directly north of the commercial building and healthcare facility. A drive continues around Tower East to the southeast side of the complex where a smaller parking area for employees is located. There are open courtyards between the commercial office buildings complemented with stone benches and artistic fountains and sculptures. The two residential towers are connected with an arcaded wood scalloped walkway which is flanked by a landscaped sitting area with trees, tables and square gazebo with the same exterior finish as the towers. Additional green space surrounds the complex on the east and south sides separating the complex from the interstate.

Individual Property Physical and Architectural Descriptions-

212 S. Grand Blvd. - 1967- Schwarz and Van Hoefen- Photo # 1, 2

This building is glass and concrete featuring a 120-foot circular cantilevered roof supported by large round concrete pillars. A circular concrete drive encompasses the building. A primary entrance faces Grand Blvd and consists of a metal and glass entrance door flanked by large glass windows. The upper portion of the building is textured concrete with vertical bands that wrap around the building. This building was constructed to serve as a garage and gas station for the tenants of Council Plaza.

C

300 S. Grand Blvd. Union Plaza -1966- Schwarz and Van Hoefen- Photo # 3,4,5,6,11

The Union Plaza building has an H-configuration with a 2-story building on each end interconnected with a bridge creating public courtyards within the confines of the two structures. The architectural theme is a streamline design with horizontal bands of narrow metal windows wrapping around all elevations. The south end is approximately 600 feet long and is the equivalent of a 60 story building laid on its side. The north end though similar in design is slightly shorter and wider. The exterior walls are constructed of the same exposed aggregate panels as the two high rise buildings. The second floor is cantilevered providing a covered walk area around the buildings. Connected at the west end of the buildings is a smaller square office building matching design and style. On the east end is the powerhouse building which holds all of the generators, pumps and chillers for the entire complex. There are commercial stores, shops, a restaurant, pharmacy and the Labor Health Institute Medical Center located within these buildings. The south side of Council Plaza houses the executive offices for Union Local 688 and also includes a 1000 seat auditorium. **2 C**

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Council Plaza
St. Louis [Independent City], MO

300 S. Grand Blvd.-Council Tower West – 1964- Schwarz and Van Hoefen- Photo #7, 8

Council Tower West is a 16-story high-rise built in 1964. It is constructed of pre-cast concrete walls with exposed aggregate. The first floor is cantilevered to provide a covered walk area into and around the building. The main floor contains a large lobby with elevators and large full height glass and metal windows with a view of a courtyard to the west. The upper floors are divided from the first floor with a horizontal band of exposed aggregate with vertical divisions on the east and west elevations. This differentiates the main floor from the residential portion of the building. The window fenestration on the west and east elevations is symmetrical and divided by twelve vertical concrete bands with four double hung windows in each section. Horizontal concrete bands divide the remaining fifteen floors. The north and south elevations are smooth and unadorned. A small park adjoins the two-high rise buildings and an arcaded walkway provides outside access between them. **C**

310 S. Grand Blvd.-Council Tower East- 1968- Schwarz and Van Hoefen- Photo #9, 10,

Council Tower East is a 27-story high rise rectangular structure constructed of pre-cast concrete walls with exposed aggregate. A 250 foot relief sculpture was designed and created in brick by artists Saunders Schultz and William Severson, nationally known sculptors and is visible on the St. Louis skyline on the east elevation. The bas relief carving took 15 months to complete and used about 100,000 brick. The sculpture utilizes a series of abstract arch geometric designs representing, "*man's continual striving toward God.*" The artists also designed a small fountain within the complex and a sculpture within the fountain, Catfish and Crystal. The east and west elevations are unadorned exposed aggregate. The north and south elevations have symmetrical window fenestration divided into eight horizontal bands with four metal windows each. The building contains 303 apartments built for elderly housing and currently remains in the same function and unchanged since its construction in 1968. Directly east of Council Tower East is a non-contributing square concrete and aggregate gazebo located within the court yard. **C**

The following examines the Council Plaza District for the seven areas of Integrity required for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Location: Council Plaza occupies the nine acre site in Mill Creek on which it was built. It fully retains its integrity of Location.

Design: The design of Council Plaza by Schwarz and Van Hoefen expresses the modern architecture movement in St. Louis. The incorporation of exposed aggregate panels and formal symmetry of its towers reflects the simplicity of its design. Distinctive features include the streamline windows that wrap around the office and commercial complex and the merging of art with architecture as represented by the sculpture on Tower East. The Council Plaza fully retains its

integrity of Design through the retention of its original form, plan, spaces, structure and style.

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Council Plaza
St. Louis [Independent City], MO

Setting: Setting refers to the physical environment surrounding a historic property. Council Plaza has two settings. A private setting created within its own parameters consisting of open walkways and courtyards with benches and a fountain. The two towers are connected by an arched walkway with a landscaped courtyard with trees and shrubs. The perimeter of Council Plaza is surrounded by St. Louis University and Interstate 44. Council Plaza retains its integrity of Setting through its retention of original, manmade landscape features and its relationship between the buildings and surrounding area.

Materials: Very few alterations have occurred at Council Plaza other than routine maintenance. Its original exterior materials and character are intact. All of the original glass and windows remain and the interior finish of the first floor lobbies remains intact.

Workmanship: Workmanship is evident in the quality of the building construction and its overall layout design. The architects wanted to create an urban environment for residents amidst a growing midtown area. The use of artwork within the built environment represents skilled craftsmanship and a cultural addition to the Plaza. The Council Plaza retains its integrity of Workmanship.

Feeling: Council Plaza fully retains integrity of Feeling. It continues to function with the "urban" concept of housing by offering the healthcare services of the LHI and the availability of commercial and retail businesses for residents.

Association: The design and function of Council Plaza creates a strong connection to local urban community design in St. Louis and addresses the problems of housing within the city. It retains its integrity of Association and continues to function as it did when constructed.

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Council Plaza
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

Summary:

Council Plaza, located at 212, 300 & 310 S. Grand, St. Louis [Independent City] is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT and SOCIAL HISTORY. Though constructed between, 1964 and 1968, the property meets CRITERIA CONSIDERATION G as a resource that has gained significance in the last 50 years. Council Plaza was constructed during a turbulent period for the St. Louis Housing Authority who was struggling to survive financially while trying to resolve a public outcry to mend the substandard living conditions and severe housing shortages for families and the elderly in the city. The construction and concept of Council Plaza by private sponsors was immediately recognized by the St. Louis Housing Authority as "a development that will be a civic contribution of inestimable value to the community and stimulate the development of the Mill Creek Area." Envisioned by labor leader and dedicated community activist, Harold Gibbons, the complex addressed a great need in the city and became a social and architectural experiment within the context of community development for its "total community" concept to specifically address the housing, medical and social needs of the local elderly population. Constructed in the early years of Section 202 of the Housing Act of 1959, the complex was the first and largest publicly assisted housing project built in St. Louis and Missouri and one of only 6% in the nation that offered on-site medical facilities to its tenants. In 1967, it was praised by Governor George Romney as an "outstanding example of senior citizen housing".

Furthermore, the design concept and managerial administration of Council Plaza set a precedent with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for St. Louis's local public housing system. During the crisis of the 1969 Rent Strike in St. Louis, HUD investigative authorities denoted the managerial expertise of the Teamsters Union, the successful operation of the Council Plaza complex and Gibbons technical expertise to speak effectively on housing issues. The Department strongly recommended that city officials turn over management and operation of the total St. Louis housing program to Gibbons and the Teamsters Union thus spawning the creation of the St. Louis Civic Alliance for Housing. Both civic and federal officials have cast credit and praise to the programs and principles incorporated by Council Plaza and the Teamsters Union for installing new management and helping stabilize a dysfunctional public housing system in St. Louis. The period of significance for the district is 1964-1969, the years in which the complex was developed through the end of the 1969 Rent Strike in St. Louis.

Elaboration:

In defining the exceptional significance of Council Plaza, the project must be assessed within the context of the history of the social and economic environment of the nation, Federal Housing Policy and the St. Louis public housing system prior and during its construction period. A multitude of events led up to public and elderly housing crisis in St. Louis beginning with the devastating effects of the Great Depression which created a stagnant economy with high unemployment, low wages and many sectors of society in desperate need of assistance.

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Council Plaza

St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

The housing industry was in a crisis situation with the major cities facing issues of dilapidated buildings, few amenities and greatly needed maintenance and repairs causing many social and health concerns for tenants. There was also a severe housing shortage for low income persons and overcrowding became a primary concern by the 1940s. This multi-arena of issues brought "housing policy" to the forefront of the public and government administrations not only in St. Louis but all over the country. The political arena assumed a principal role in trying to create programs under Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal Agenda to help ensure economic stability and public confidence.

Federal Housing Policy-

In June of 1934, the United States Congress passed the first national **Federal Housing Act (FHA)** which created the **Federal Housing Administration (FHA)** to insure mortgage loans of lower-income citizens by approved financial institutions and help people acquire financing through private banks for the purchase, construction, repair and improvements of houses. It was soon followed by the enactment of the **United States Housing Act of 1937** which created the United States Housing Authority to administer funds for new programs and to replace the Federal Housing Administration. This act was specifically geared toward national low-rent housing, slum clearance projects and provided loans to local governments to build public housing complexes for lower-income residents. These projects would be carried out by local public agencies or authorities as designated by state law. It proposed to promote the general welfare of the nation by assisting the states in alleviating unsafe and unsanitary housing conditions and remedying the acute shortage of decent, safe dwellings for low income families. ¹ The 1937 Housing Act did not provide housing for the elderly population. The **Housing Act of 1949** amended the 1937 act and controlled public housing policy for the next several decades establishing the national housing objective to provide for considerable expansion of the low-cost public housing program to include federal aid to assist slum-clearance, community development, urban renewal and redevelopment programs. ² Two basic types of programs were available through this act, the first known as "conventional" public housing. These programs created affordable housing projects that were directly funded and built by the government, and those developed by private industry or non-profits that used direct low interest loans from the PWA or other agencies to make the end product more affordable. The second program was "turn-key" in which private interests developed the complex and then sold it to a public agency or housing authority. These early programs were developed during a time in which multiple social and health concerns needed to be addressed. Unfortunately, the 1949 Act was not as successful as anticipated and its structure led to many vague policies and uncertain target populations. The primary focus articulated in both the 1937 and 1949 Acts were slum clearance and unemployment, neither held provisions of housing for low income persons or the elderly as a central goal.

¹ *Public Housing Problems*. Public Housing and Urban Renewal Policy), 1959, pgs. 71-96.

² Meehan, Eugene J., *The Quality of Federal Policymaking*. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1979), pg 11.

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Council Plaza
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

Emphasis was placed on development and construction, progress was measured by dollars spent, wages generated, or numbers of units produced or demolished.³ This directly affected the quality of building construction thus causing mounting problems for maintenance of the buildings and forced housing authorities to pass down rising costs to tenants by raising rent. Another factor that contributed to the rising problems with public housing was the changing social climate and public opinion of public housing.

After World War II, populations began to shift from the inner city to the suburbs in many large cities. Industries began to expand and relocate to cheaper land on the outskirts of cities and technological advances in transportation provided accessibility to these areas thus leaving the older areas of the city full of deteriorating houses and industrial slums. These areas were mainly occupied by very poor, unemployed black residents and the elderly. The movement of the income-producing populations out of public housing caused a massive decline in rent proceeds to the local housing authorities. These declining revenues forced LHAs to limit repairs and resources causing additional decay and vandalism. The public also posed an additional problem in their prejudice against public housing, and so the US Housing Authority and local public agencies had to confront both private sector disinterest and citizen opposition. The public began to think that clearance of the slums too often meant simply transporting the slums to other neighborhoods, and that any clearance and construction that did take place did so with insufficient citizen input.⁴

During the 1950s, legislation established numerous acts to try and help stabilize housing policy and promote more support. The **Housing Act of 1954** enhanced the urban redevelopment program under the 1949 Act and called the new version "urban renewal", a term that described a broader, more comprehensive approach to the problems of slums and urban blight. Urban renewal was intended to be a broad description of programs that were locally conceived, planned and executed and carried out by a local public agency. Federal assistance was only available when local resources were insufficient to complete a project. The legislation provided funding for rehabilitation of redeemable housing, not just for clearance of sub-standard housing, and required that all new construction take place in the cleared neighborhood.⁵ Urban renewal was intended to improve the urban environment through the elimination of blight and the "coordinated application of all municipal powers to an area basis for the execution of a master plan", but according to the American Institute of Planners, the urban renewal program fell short of its goals.⁶

³ Ibid. Meehan.

⁴ Brown, Raymond. *A Time for Accounting: The Housing and Community Development Act in the South*. (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council 1976), pgs. 54-71.

⁵ Holleman, Margaret Martin. *The Evolution of Federal Housing Policy*, Nashville Civic Design Center, 2002.

⁶ ³⁵ *A Statement of Policy on Urban Renewal*. The American Institute of Planners. 1959. pg. 1.

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Council Plaza
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

Because the urban renewal legislation was limited to funding projects that were predominantly residential either before or after their development; "important areas of the community are left without an effective means for improvement..."⁷ One neglected demographic of society was the rapidly increasing elderly population who up until 1956, had not had their social and health needs or living conditions effectively evaluated. Retirement and insurance programs had been created for the elderly, such as the Social Security Act passed in 1935 which provided for Old Age Assistance and Old Age Survivors Insurance and in 1937, the Railroad Retirement Act was established which created pensions for retired railroad employees and spouses. Special agencies were created to aid in coordinating responsibilities for the aging such as the Federal Council on Aging in 1956. The **Housing Act of 1956** under **Sections 203 and 207** created a subsidy incentive program for Leas to construct housing for the elderly. The only requirements for construction were additional safety features such as, handrails and device warnings making construction costs relatively low with a high return and a desirable elderly tenant population with little consequences. These high-rise boxes provided relatively small apartments for the elderly with very few amenities for a population that had specialized needs and wanted more from life than "just a waiting room to pass time."

It wasn't until the **Housing Act of 1959** was created that legislation specifically addressed affordable, quality and independent senior housing through the implementation of the Section 202 Program, the oldest active subsidized program.⁸ It also created the **Section 231 Program** which was a mortgage insurance program to finance new or rehabilitated rental housing the mobile elderly. Some projects were eligible for rent subsidies and developers could be either profit-motivated or non-profit organizations. The **Section 202 Program** was designed as a low-interest rate loan program with rental subsidy to provide independent living for elderly and handicapped persons. It authorized direct loans to non-profit organizations so that they could develop and operate multifamily and elderly housing projects, primarily moderate income elderly persons. The program has undergone two major changes since its inception. In 1968, it was suspended and phased into the Section 236 Program which offered rental and cooperative housing for low income families by insuring mortgages for the lender and providing interest reduction payments to the lender. In 1974, the Section 202 Program as reactivated and became a loan program with project-based Section 8 rental assistance and in 1991 it became a capital advance program with project rental assistance.⁹

⁷ Ibid. Meehan.

⁸ Heumann, Leonard F. *Aging in Place in Housing Designed for Independent Living: The Case of The U.S. Section 202 Programs*. (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers), 1993.

⁹ Written Statement of Secretary Alphoso Jackson. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. June 16, 2005.

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Council Plaza
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

Department of Housing and Urban Development Act 1965 enacted an alternative approach to supply housing for low income by lease of privately owned facilities and it established federal assistance that was administered through local public agencies, to provide rehabilitation grants for home repairs and rehabilitation. The bill also expanded public housing programs for the elderly and the disabled. In 1965, *The Older Americans Act* was also signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson.¹⁰ This Act created the Administration on Aging and authorized grants to States for community planning and service programs, as well as offered assistance for research, demonstration and training projects. The Department of Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 created the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) whose primary mission is to increase homeownership, support community development and to increase access to affordable housing free from discrimination.



Signing of the Older Americans Act 1965 by President Johnson

Civil Rights brought on the enactment of the **Fair Housing Act** of 1968 which outlawed most housing discrimination and gave HUD enforcement responsibility. Other advancements were enacted by the **Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968** which sought to increase homeownership and help low-income individuals rent housing. By 1974, housing policy had been substantially reshaped through a Housing and Community Development Act which consolidated programs under Community Development Block Grants with strict guidelines. The bill also created a major reform under the Section 8 program which created a new rental leasing subsidy program and gave tenant's more choice of housing.

¹⁰ This was also the same year Medicare was established.

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Council Plaza
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

Since its inception, the Section 202 program has been designed to house independent low-income elderly persons. Although the program has evolved over the last three decades, the primary goal has remained the same, to defray basic shelter costs for people who could not afford private housing. Since 1980, the construction of public housing has become almost non-existent in the United States leaving the Section 202 program as the only available subsidy for low-income housing.¹¹ The success of the program was contributed to its design structure being limited to non-profit sponsors and characterized by a unified and specialized administrative structure operating under simple and informal rules. The Department of Housing and Urban Development produced an executive summary of the Section 202 Programs from 1959 to 1977. The major finding of their evaluation was that Section 202 had generally produced good quality, cost-effective and financially viable housing projects for the elderly.¹² Subsequent scholarly analysis determines that the Section 202 program helped awaken the nation to the social service needs of the elderly and became the basis on which HUD would build its continuum of care programs for the elderly.¹³

St. Louis Public Housing-

The sixty-five year history of St. Louis public housing has like many other major cities in the United States, been plagued with the social and economic problems of high unemployment, housing shortages and health concerns. The legacy of failure within the St. Louis Public Housing Authority and its programs has been examined by numerous scholars who cannot agree on one primary event or factor that caused the downfall and the highly publicized disaster of the city's system. Reverend Richard John Quirk, Doctor of Philosophy suggests that a multitude of issues ranging from population shifts, racial tensions and political power struggles among the city's leadership contributed to the decline.¹⁴ Eugene Meehan contends that poor fiscal policy beginning with the earlier federal programs and complacent city management slowly evolved the St. Louis Public Housing program into an unmanageable enigma.¹⁵ James Neal Primm maintains that by 1940, St. Louis was noted as the worst place among the nation's twelve largest metropolitan areas for substandard housing.¹⁶ And the St. Louis City Plan Commission Report of 1942 reported a deep concern for the condition of the housing stock and that the city was not "livable".¹⁷ St. Louis's housing crisis erupted in 1969 with a public housing rent strike that brought the city to its knees financially and forced action to be taken to help with the unsanitary living conditions, lack of security, social dilemmas and the overall shortage of

¹¹ Ibid. Heumann

¹² *Housing for the Elderly and Handicapped. The Experience of the Section 202 Program.* Department of Housing and Urban Development. February 21, 1979.

¹³ Quirk, Richard John. *The Continued Decline of the Social and Economic Fabric of the City of St. Louis.* (Ann Arbor, MI: Proquest Company) 2001.

¹⁴ Ibid. Quirk.

¹⁵ Ibid. Meehan.

¹⁶ Primm, James Neal. *Lion of the Valley, St. Louis, Missouri, 1764-1980.* (St. Louis, MO: Missouri Historical Society Press). 1998. pgs. 438-459.

¹⁷ *St. Louis City Plan Commission Report.* October 16, 1942.

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affordable and acceptable housing. St. Louis not only had a crisis among low-income families but also a rising elderly population whose housing needs had not been adequately evaluated by the city and were not addressed by the federal government until 1959.

In 1936, the St. Louis Regional Planning Association supported by the Civil Works Administration and Works Progress Administration Staff, developed a recommendation survey for the city citing that it had become evident that the lack of a housing program based upon public need had resulted in overcrowding and an inadequate supply of well designed low cost houses.¹⁸ The Housing Act of 1937 enabled Missouri Legislature to allow for the creation of the St. Louis Housing Authority in 1939 to help the citizen's and their needs for housing. Two areas for public housing were cleared and created for low-income families: The Clinton-Peabody located at Chouteau and Fourteenth, housing 657 white families and the Carr Square project, housing 658 African-American families. Both of these facilities were intended for the small family with a low-income who couldn't afford higher rents or to buy a home. Both of these complexes operated successfully through World War II, primarily due to shifts in tenant occupancy toward war production workers who had fairly adequate incomes. Problems began to occur toward the end of the war when production demands decreased, unemployment rose and these tenants left the public housing units.

St. Louis's early public housing programs were not intended for the unemployed, extremely low-income persons or those dependent on public assistance. Prior to 1954, few welfare recipients were admitted to the St. Louis Public Housing program unless they had other means of income to pay their required rent. Since the Housing Authority was solely dependent on rental income, a quota system was used to limit admission of welfare recipients into public housing. The Welfare Agency would reduce public assistance income when persons were accepted into public housing units due to the low rent, causing tenant income levels to drop and rental income to the public housing program to decline. The dependency to operate on rental income played a major role in the decline of the St. Louis Public Housing. The structure of this program was greatly affected by inflationary circumstances forcing increases in rent to tenants who were not on public assistance but whose income did not rise in accordance to costs. Ultimately, this fiscal failure was one of the contributors to the decay of St. Louis Public Housing and the onset of the Rent Strike of 1969.¹⁹ In 1949, St. Louis elected a new mayor, Mayor Joseph Darst, who promoted change and new plans for St. Louis. The city improvements fell into three categories: over-all progress; low-income housing, wherein substandard, unsanitary and indecent housing was replaced with new, modern accommodations; and slum clearance, wherein private enterprise was encouraged to serve as much of the total housing need as it could for moderate-income groups.

¹⁸ The St. Louis Regional Planning Association. *Preliminary Report on a Regional Survey and Plan for St. Louis Regional Area*. 1936.

¹⁹ Ibid. Meehan.

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The Mayor greatly supported the formation of the Housing Act of 1949 and traveled to Washington D.C. to assist with its passage and policies. The importance of this Act to the welfare of the nation was evident in the Preamble Address,

"The Congress declares that the general welfare and security of the Nation and the health and living standards of its people require housing production and related community development sufficient to remedy the serious housing shortage, the elimination of substandard housing through the clearance of slums and blighted areas, and the realization as soon as feasible of the goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family, thus contributing to the development and redevelopment of communities and to the advancement of the growth, wealth, and security of the nation."

The majority of the public housing in St. Louis produced under the Housing Act of 1949 was developed within a five-year period between 1953 and 1957. The complexes were constructed of steel, concrete and brick, located on flat areas that had been part of the slum clearance project. Cochran Gardens (1953) held 704 units of housing consisting of eight buildings. Pruitt (1955) and Igoe (1956) contained thirty-three eleven-story buildings. Vaughn (1957) and Darst (1956) were identical, each containing four nine-story apartments. In 1961, the Anthony M. Webbe Apartments were constructed which included two nine-story and one twelve-story building for families and one eight-story building for the elderly. This was the first building constructed specifically for the aging population in St. Louis. In 1963, a nine-story building was added to the George Vaughn complex to house the elderly and in 1968 two-fifteen story buildings were constructed in the Arthur Blumeyer Apartments for the elderly.²⁰ The public housing shortage for the elderly was still evident in 1978, under a new initiatives program the St. Louis Housing Authority recognized that there was still a severe shortage of elderly housing within the city and proposed conversions of existing buildings specifically for the elderly with a more suitable design.²¹

In 1961, there were over 150,000 people 65 years or older in Metropolitan St. Louis, the public housing complexes constructed between 1961- 1968 only offered 1,854 units to elderly tenants.²² A special tabulation of the 1960 Census prepared by the Census Bureau for the St. Louis Housing Authority revealed that one-fifth of all renter-occupied substandard dwellings in St. Louis were occupied by families whose household head was 65 years of age or over.²³

²⁰ Kaplan, Ethan. *The Residents of St. Louis Public Housing: A Socio-Economic and Demographic Report*. (Ph. D. diss., University of St. Louis, December 1972).

²¹ St. Louis Housing Authority: *Public Housing: St. Louis Urban Initiatives Program*. 1978.

²² United States. Congress. Senate. Special Committee on Aging. Subcommittee on Housing for the Elderly. December 8, 1961.

²³ Statement of Bethune, Roderick A. Regional Administrator Housing and Home Finance Agency. U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Housing of The Senate Special Committee on Aging December 8, 1961.

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The result of this tabulation showed the tremendous magnitude of the problem for suitable elderly housing in St. Louis. A general population study was done by the St. Louis City Planning Commission which revealed that the city's age composition in 1960 was strikingly different from that of the nation as a whole. Graphically, the normal age-sex distribution should form a pyramidal shape with a broad base in the lower age groups and gradually narrow as the older age brackets are reached. (See Figure Three) Within the "City", this "normal" distribution did not occur. From 1950 to 1960, compared to the rest of the U.S. the age bracket of "over 65" had increased considerably for the city of St. Louis and when you look at a thirty-year span it is the only group that had an increase. (See Figure Four)²⁴ This was a general trend across the country but Missouri in particular had a larger than average senior population (more than 11.8% of the total population).

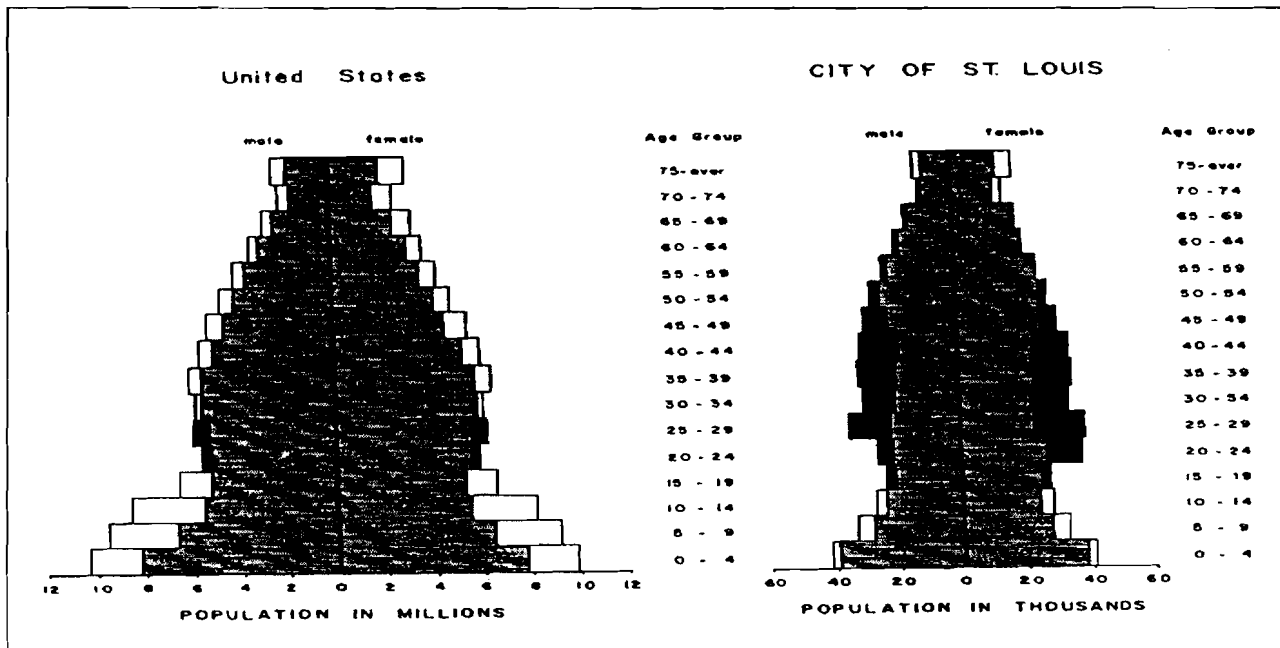


FIGURE THREE
TOTAL POPULATION BY AGE/SEX
US AND CITY OF ST. LOUIS
1960 less than 1950
1960 more than 1950

²⁴ St. Louis City Plan Commission. *Population*. 1964.

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	<u>Under 15 Years</u>	<u>15 - 24</u>	<u>25 - 44</u>	<u>45 - 64</u>	<u>65 And Over</u>	<u>Total</u>
1930 - 1940	-23453	-18042	- 6282	+23587	+18760	- 5430
1940 - 1950	+25503	- 9113	- 10642	+16462	+18538	+ 40748
1950 - 1960	+22774	-25725	- 92032	-23519	+11732	-106770
1930 - 1960	+24824	-52880	-108956	+16530	+49030	- 71452

Figure Four
Change in Age Composition
Source: U.S. Census of Population 1950-1960
Prepared by St. Louis City Plan Commission 1963

In 1961, due to the rising housing, social and health concerns of the elderly in St. Louis, the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Housing held a special series of hearings to address the issues and problems that the city was facing and listen to the concerned citizens. Senator Edward V. Long stated, "the elderly segment of our population have varying degrees of housing needs. The first, being that after retirement incomes are very much reduced and it is difficult to maintain their current housing arrangements or to find suitable and affordable housing. Secondly, our older citizens live in smaller family units or alone, have reduced physical strength and are susceptible to illness and chronic conditions that require special care." He continues to state that special consideration should be warranted pertaining to the unique housing needs of the elderly. "Our approach should be one which recognizes the desire of people to live independently and to have a place in a neighborhood or community."²⁵ The U.S. Public Administration admitted at the U.S. Senate Hearings that the department had become acutely aware of the need for "total" planning in connection with projects for the elderly. Two of the biggest problems encountered in the administration of public housing programs for senior citizens are 1) financial feasibility and (2) proper planning, so that the projects will meet all needs of the elderly tenants including sociological and health needs.²⁶

²⁵ Ibid. U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Housing of The Senate Special Committee on Aging .

²⁶ Ibid. Bethune.

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The views expressed at the Senate hearings indicated strongly that along with the rising elderly population housing crisis, a host of additional problems were arising such as providing for the social and healthcare needs for the elderly and designing housing units to adequately and safely provide a quality "lifestyle". William Loring of Architectural Forum, addresses the new design criteria necessary for the elderly housing market. He states that the "aged" require a sensitive balance of privacy and sociability and that sociological research suggests that any anxiety faced too long alone may be disintegrating.²⁷ His solution is through the design of elderly housing. He suggests outdoor social areas that encourage group sitting located within courtyards or close to main entrances and recommends creating indoor common rooms which consist of informal sitting rooms or alcoves located within private units and public common areas for laundry, hobbies, or a community multipurpose social hall. His design theory would be much more than "shelter from the winds" but a residence suited to the special needs and activities of the elderly which can result in a worthwhile environment and more meaningful life.²⁸ Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois stated "that older people themselves, plea for the opportunity to work and demand the right to participate fully in life."²⁹

Due to the increasing senior population of St. Louis, housing problems no longer solely belonged to the low and moderate income families but also to the rising elderly population, the city agencies and the entire community. William Stelpflug, Chairman of the Planning Committee on Aging, Health and Welfare Council of Metropolitan St. Louis, addressed the U.S. Senate Committee reiterating the unique problems faced by the elderly community for proper housing including offering safety bars, nonskid floors and personal safety. He also agreed that the majority live on reduced incomes incapable of competing with inflationary costs. The question he posed to the committee was, "*Is public housing a community responsibility?*" He stated that "many agencies were willing to help with the problem in St. Louis because the public housing authority is unable, legally or financially, to provide a coordinated administrative structure."³⁰ The construction and development of Council Plaza was one man's response to Mr. Stelpflug's question. With a failing local public housing administration, the responsibility to address the elderly citizens' concerns for housing, healthcare and safety had to be approached by private citizens and corporate sponsors. Harold Gibbons had a history of responding to the needs of the community and its citizens. In his view, proper elderly housing and a quality lifestyle were becoming a primary problem for all.

²⁷ Loring, William C. *Design for a new housing market*. Architectural Forum. March 1961.

²⁸ Loring. Ibid.

²⁹ Statement of Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois, U.S. Senate Committee Hearings. December 8, 1961.

³⁰ Statement of William J. Stelpflug, Chairman of Planning Committee on Aging, Health and Welfare Council of Metropolitan St. Louis. U.S. Senate Committee Hearings. December 8, 1961.

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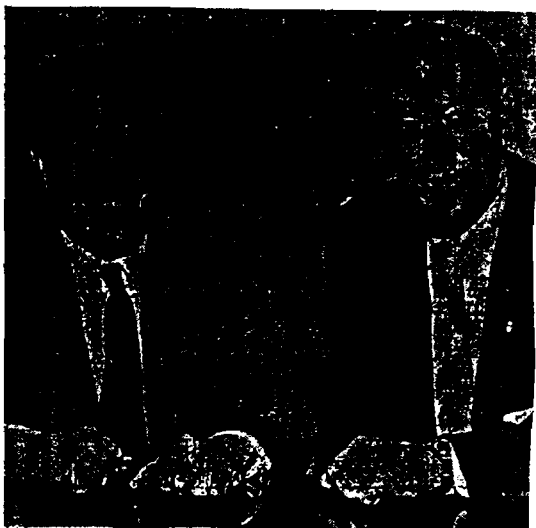
Council Plaza Significance-

Harold V. Gibbons, founder of Council Plaza, was a nationally and locally recognized labor leader for pioneering and labor activism on democratic, progressive unionism. He avowed that "any local, state, or national problem affecting the social and civic well-being of our citizen-members and community is the concern of our union."³¹ He arrived in St. Louis in 1941 becoming the director of the St. Louis Council of the Congress of Industrial Organizations Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Employees Union.³² In 1949, he became the leader of the Local 688, chartered as an affiliate of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. He led numerous organizing campaigns as an official with the CIO in Chicago and served as Teamsters Joint Council 13 President, Missouri-Kansas Conference of Teamsters President, Director of the Central Conference of Teamsters and served as executive assistant to IBT General President James R. Hoffa from 1957 to 1963. Hoffa and Gibbons had a "public dispute" over conduct related to the death of President John F. Kennedy. Gibbons issued a statement of condolence on behalf of the International. Upon hearing the statement, Hoffa

MAY 11 1969 Post-Dis.

ordered that it be retracted and his own statement issued, "the President's death made Attorney General Kennedy, **just another lawyer.**" Hoffa also became enraged when Gibbons flew the headquarters flag at half staff the day of the President's funeral and sent the employees home. Two weeks later Gibbons resigned his position as Hoffa's executive assistant.³³

Harold Gibbons sought to represent the community interests of its African-American members. He was an early supporter of Civil Rights and equality for all. He stated that discrimination is something he learned about early in life being from a Protestant community and having an Irish-Catholic background. Local 688 was involved with a drive to desegregate public facilities in downtown St. Louis in the early 1950s. In 1952, they presented a proposal for ending segregation in public schools to the St. Louis Board of Education.³⁴



James R. Hoffa met with Gibbons here in 1957 soon after Hoffa became tribal president of the Teamsters Union.

³¹ Missouri Humanities Council. *St. Louis Labor History Tour*. 1994.

³² St. Louis Post Dispatch. *Teamster Boss*. May 11, 1969.

³³ St. Louis Post Dispatch. *Gibbons and Hoffa Split; What's Ahead*. May 14, 1969.

³⁴ This proposal was presented two years prior to the Supreme Court school decision.

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The plan included gradual integration including mixed participation in some athletics, employment of teachers of both races and a mandatory high school course in human relations. Gibbons and other local members participated in the a civil rights march in Washington in 1963 and a delegation was sent to Selma, Alabama in 1965 to give moral support to the African American campaign for full voting rights and participate in the march from Selma to Montgomery.³⁵ Local 688 have had non-discrimination clauses written into its contracts since 1944.

Not only was community service an emphasis among the Local 688, but Gibbons promoted health care providing thousands of Local 688 members complete health care security for the first time in their lives. The Union's Labor Health Institute was founded in 1948 and is one of the first HMO's developed in the United States. It provided full medical and dental services to members and their families and was financed totally by employer contributions. It also offered medical and dental services to all tenants of Council Plaza who were non-union members for the low cost of \$4.00 a month. The LHI stressed preventive medicine and became a model for other health maintenance organizations throughout North America.³⁶ The Labor Health Institute still continues to operate a successful medical facility at Council Plaza.

In 1959, the Local 688 opened a 300 acre health camp near Pevely, MO. Teamsters were entitled to use the camp facilities with their families and enjoy swimming, sports and overnight camping areas. In 1967, education programs for members were established in which groups of 20 would attend a four-day weekend retreat to achieve as Gibbons phrased it, "a greater awareness of their value to society. We want to overcome the image the laborer often has of himself as merely a cog in a machine." Politics, international affairs, civil rights education, community action and labor history were many of topics discussed.³⁷

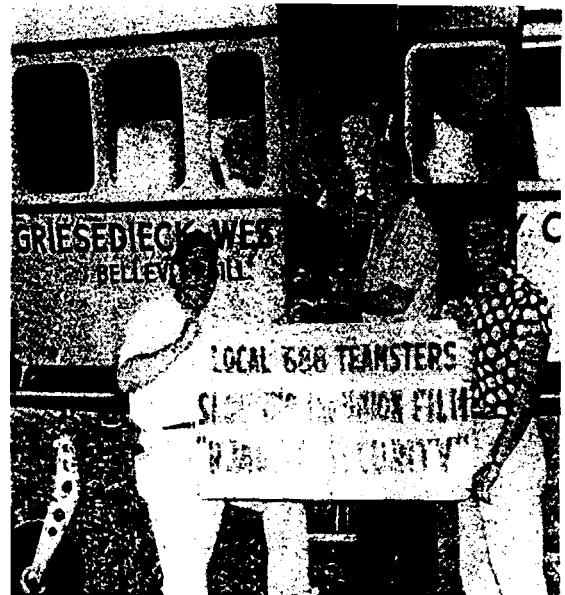


Photo courtesy the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, University of Missouri-St. Louis
"The Road to Security" seemed possible in the 1950s, and Harold Gibbons (top, in plane) was determined that the union would provide it to workers.

³⁵ Ibid. St. Louis Post Dispatch, May 14, 1969.

³⁶ Ibid. St. Louis Post Dispatch, May 14, 1969.

³⁷ Ibid. St. Louis Post Dispatch, May 11, 1969.

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Due to Harold Gibbons's unique brand of progressive and community-based unionism, he was widely considered the "father" of Local 688. While many people associate the Teamsters with a tough "bread and butter" unionism tainted by corruption, Gibbons challenged these labels and fought to change these perceptions. He avowed that "any local, state, or national problem affecting the social and civic well-being of our citizen-members is the concern of our union."³⁸ Gibbons believed that trade unions had an obligation to represent the concerns of workers where they lived. Gibbons encouraged the Local 688 to become community activists by creating a community stewards program in the early 1950s to benefit assigned areas throughout the city. They represented fellow citizens' grievances about the slow removal of fallen trees or garbage, the need for playgrounds, locations of bus stops, etc. The city's rat-control ordinance in the slum sections was one of their first successful actions. By the mid 1950s, the local had established community service centers throughout the city.³⁹ The union also supported the Metropolitan Sewer District, the Bi-Sate Developmental Agency (urban mass transit district), the Community College District of St. Louis and the Tandy area Council, Missouri's Fair Employment Practices Law and the Public Accommodation Law and the Mill Creek Urban Renewal Program.

In 1959, the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority of St. Louis began the Mill Creek Urban Renewal Project with funds from a \$7 million bond issue approved in 1955 and with \$21 million in federal funds. The project cleared a 454-acre site of blighted areas, slum homes and dilapidated commercial and industrial buildings between Lindell-Olive Avenue, Scott Avenue, Twentieth Street and Grand Avenue displacing up to 13,860 people of which 2,426 were over the age of sixty.⁴⁰ The Mill Creek redevelopment slowed almost to a halt until 1962 when private developers and non-profit sponsors took an interest in the area for the construction of new developments, specifically to attract middle class whites and blacks. Harold Gibbons and the Teamsters saw an opportunity through the Section 202 Program and the acquisition of land through the Land Clearance Authority to give back in part to St. Louis's citizens for helping the Teamsters Union in becoming the largest, single labor movement in the country through which 1, 750,000 men and their families found adequacies of income, proper working conditions and a host of health and welfare benefits. Gibbons believed his organization was the ideal organization, socially motivated and equipped with the necessary financial resources and technical skills, to be empowered to participate in a greater America and make a better way of life for its older generations. From a practical viewpoint, Gibbons knew that retiree pensions and social security is approximately 50 percent less than during working years. His concern for the psychological, sociological, physiological and economical requirements of these citizens to remain active healthy citizens prompted his vision of Council Plaza.⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid. St. Louis Labor History Tour.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ S.I.U.E. Gibbons; Collection, Box 13, Council House Development. *Application of Council House Redevelopment Corporation No. 2*, Housing and Home finance Agency. September 19, 1963.

⁴¹ S.I.U.E. Gibbons' Collection, Box 14, Council Plaza-Public Relations Correspondence. Letter from Arthur E. Klein, Consultant to Clinton Page. News Editor of Architectural and Engineering News. May 25, 1967.

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In November of 1962, the Wall Street Journal announced, "*Teamsters Will Build Apartments in St. Louis for Retirees*".⁴² In January of 1963, Gibbon's and the Joint Council of Teamsters approached the St. Louis Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority regarding the acquisition of a nine-acre tract in the Mill Creek project area. The Council proposed the construction of an outstanding non-profit type elderly residential and ancillary commercial development that would greatly benefit the community and the city. At this time, the site was occupied by two businesses the Bissell Auto & Body Company and the ADA Redevelopment Corporation both of which were supportive and cooperative in releasing their property. Additional negotiations took place with the city for the relocation of a fire station that was slated to be built on a portion of the site and the project received full support from the St. Louis Board of Commissioners on June 20, 1963.



The view to the west and the Kingshighway skyline.

Residents of retirement center going up in Mill Creek Valley
will be right in middle of things

After six months of negotiations, the Joint Council successfully reached an acceptable agreement with all parties involved. The total cost for the land was in excess of one million dollars and under urban renewal conditions, no tax would be placed on the building for ten years, and only 50% tax would be assessed for the next 15 years, although taxes would be paid on the assessed value of the land. The city was very supportive of the project and ecstatic at the prospect of additional tax revenues to be generated due to the reclassification of the tract from industrial to residential. C.L. Farris, executive director of the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority stated, "the opportunity to achieve a unified development of these tracts, which promises a contribution of such magnitude to the City of St. Louis, is an expression of the central purpose of the Urban Renewal Program."



Groundbreaking For Council House East

Groundbreaking ceremonies for Teamsters Joint Council 13 Council House East, a 27-story residence for senior citizens, were held March 6. Joining Harold J. Gibbons [center], president of the Joint Council, were Irvin

Dagen, (third from left), Executive director of the St. Louis Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority; Mayor Alfonso Cervantes (fourth from left); and Arthur Klein, (far right, front row) consultant to Council Plaza.

⁴² Wall Street Journal, *Teamsters Will Build Apartments in St. Louis for Retirees*, November 27, 1962. pg. 17.

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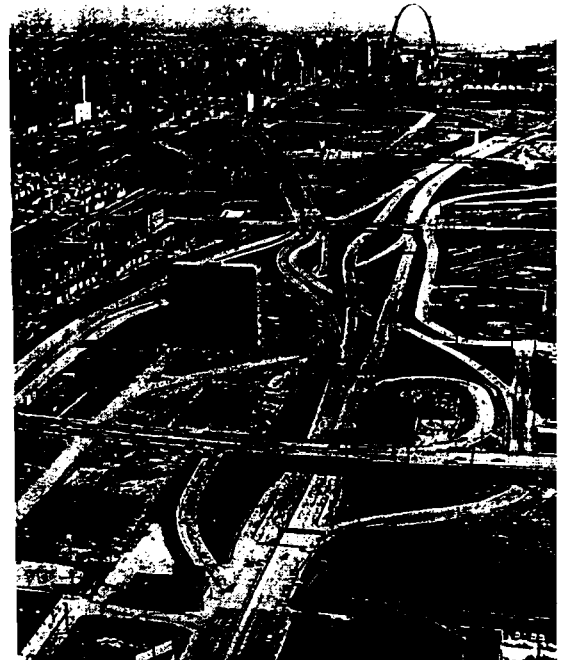
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He also said the Authority is convinced that this proposal will encourage and strengthen the residential development of Mill Creek and that the cooperation and encouragement of Mayor Tucker and other city officials have been of crucial importance in its success.⁴³

After approval by the city and acquisition of the property, the Council House Redevelopment Corporation applied to the Housing and Home Finance Agency for a loan through the Senior Citizens Housing Loan Program (Section 202). The Corporation stated that it was apparent from the records of the Public Housing Administration that there was a great need for elderly housing with no vacancies for senior housing and extremely long waiting lists for current facilities. The St. Louis Public Housing authority was planning to build additional units for the elderly but many the senior citizens would not qualify to occupy them due to "over income". The construction of Council Plaza was to help fulfill a market need which falls between low-income and private rental units.⁴⁴ Between 1959 and 1979, St. Louis had seven housing projects created under the Housing Act of 1959 of which only three were created under the Section 202 program. The Delcrest, constructed in 1967 offered 144 units for the elderly. Little Sisters of the Poor constructed in 1971, offered 160 efficiency units with an adjacent nursing home and Council Plaza, which boasted of having 604 quality living units.⁴⁵ Kansas City also had three Section 202 housing projects built during this time period, the largest only offering 235 units. These projects produced good quality, cost-effective and financially viable housing for the elderly but there were some significant variations in types of services and amenities available to tenants. These variations are primarily due to the lack of a "clear" definition of "independent living" for the elderly as defined within the program guidelines.⁴⁶ Council Plaza achieved this definition and attained the true purpose for the Section 202 Program, *independent senior living*.⁴⁷



⁴³ S.I.U.E. Gibbons' Collection Box 14, Jake McCarthy, Teamsters Union, Public Relations News Release. Sept. 4, 1963.

⁴⁴ S.I.U.E. Gibbons' Collection Box 13, Applicant Statement of Housing Demand.

⁴⁵ *Guide to Government Subsidized Housing in St. Louis*. Housing Resources Development Department of Welfare, St. Louis January 1972.

⁴⁶ Office of Multifamily Housing Development. *US Housing Developments for the Elderly or Handicapped*. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, March 1979.

⁴⁷ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Housing for the Elderly & Handicapped. The Experience of the Section 202 Program from 1959-1977*. January 1979.

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Council Plaza was designed by prominent local architects, Schwartz & Van Hoeffen of St. Louis who also designed a 1966 addition to the Henry Shaw Memorial Pavilion in Tower Grove Park and who were part of the architectural team for the construction of Busch Stadium. The first tower-Council Tower West and the Teamsters office building was constructed and completed in 1964-66. The second tower- Council Tower East was completed in 1968. On Council Tower East a 250-foot relief sculpture was designed and created in brick by artists Saunders Schultz and William Severson, nationally known sculptors and is visible on the St. Louis skyline. The artists also designed a small fountain within the complex and a sculpture within the fountain, Catfish and Crystal.⁴⁸

The apartments were designed for retired or semi-retired persons 62 years or older. A conscious effort was made when designing and decorating the tower to avoid the appearance or atmosphere of a project or nursing home.⁴⁹ Arthur Klein, development consultant for Council Tower, stated, our complex will offer more than swimming pools and shuffleboard courts; we are going to give retired people a new purpose in life." The development was a unique concept designed to help meet the needs of citizens and to continue to offer them a productive lifestyle. Residents of Council Towers were offered ways to take part in running the complex, such as assisting with maintenance, cooking and being a member of the "Good Neighbor Program".⁵⁰ All tenants were involved somehow with the upkeep of either the facility or moral at Council Plaza.

The plaza design addressed all concern's that were brought before the U.S. Senate in 1961, functioning as a nearly total concept of urban community development providing residential living, retail shopping, and professional office space, restaurants, dining facilities for tenants, medical services, automotive services and entertainment. Gibbons described the concept as, "a unique approach to social and productive living for the elderly, including planned recreational, educational and project activities to get away from the high-rise deep freeze concept of so much low income housing." Unlike most new apartment buildings, all 300 units of Council House East were filled prior to completion of the building. Over 2000 applicants had applied for residency in the new complex and a long waiting list remained. Council House West was also an immediate success in 1968 with maximum occupancy reached prior to completion. The Globe Democrat described the Council Plaza project as an experiment in retirement living describing that it's kind of planning and attention to detail launched it as an immediate success.⁵¹

⁴⁸ St. Louis Post-Dispatch. *Art 250 Feet High is Test of Courage*. June 2, 1970.

⁴⁹ Post-Dispatch. *First tenants have moved In At Teamster's Council House*. November 2, 1966.

⁵⁰ Globe Democrat Sunday Magazine. February 26, 1967.

⁵¹ Ibid. Globe Democrat.

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Because of Harold Gibbon's contributions to the community with the construction of the Council Plaza complex, new doors were being opened up to him in the political and business elite of St. Louis. No longer viewed as the "labor boss", he was appointed secretary-treasurer of the Chamber of Commerce, appointed to the board of the Herbert Hoover Boys Club and his relationship with the civic leaders was one of mutual respect.⁵² The Council Plaza Complex not only revolutionized the idea of senior housing in St. Louis but constituted a change in the social standards for the elderly and the city's obligation to this demographic. It also set a precedent for public housing as a successfully managed and operated public housing project. In February of 1969, the time bomb within the City of St. Louis's Public Housing system exploded into a revolutionary tenant rent strike. In November of 1968, public housing tenants were taxed with an unrealistic rent (50-75% of their monthly income) increase on public housing units that were unsanitary and unsafe to live. With no support from the Missouri Legislature or the HUD office, tenants were forced to find additional resources to aid them. Many local ministers, the Legal Aid Society and the National Tenant's Organization helped organize and prompt the strike. The tenants in Carr Square, Cochran Gardens and the Vaughn Apartments began their rent strike, paying their monthly rent to the leaders of the strike who placed the funds into escrow instead of paying the Public Housing Authority. The striker's demands were reasonable and justified, asking for rent reductions, improved maintenance, garbage collection and increased security. The Housing Authority had no means to negotiate and the problems could not be solved without funds which the City, state and federal administration had no intentions of giving. The strike captured both local and national recognition and the strikers were gaining a broad spectrum of support from local churches and community leaders sympathetic to the deplorable living conditions.

Due to his role and success with Council Plaza and his obvious social commitment and technical expertise to speak effectively on housing issues, Harold Gibbons was approached both by Mayor Cervantes and the strike leaders to aid in negotiations. The first proposal Mayor Cervantes offered to Gibbons was to acquire his assistance to raise private funds to help subsidize rent payments. Realizing that this was only a temporary solution and that private funds would not be sufficient to fix the problem, he rejected Cervantes invitation. On the other hand, the strikers presented Gibbons with an "ideal" vision of public housing **with a strong tenant voice and participation in management** which was in accordance with his beliefs on civil rights and community involvement. Gibbons was someone that the strikers felt they could trust to represent their demands and needs. As quoted by Mrs. Jean King one of the prominent strike leaders, "*housing projects must be made into communities that people will want to live in and be a part of...Nothing is going to take place in public housing through Mr. Gibbons that the striking tenants do not want. If you know anything at all about*

⁵² St. Louis Post Dispatch. *Teamster Boss*. Post Dispatch. May 11, 1969.

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Council Plaza
St. Louis (Independent City), Missouri

In July of 1969, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) sent a "special panel" to St. Louis to assess the city's public housing program. Appalled by the local authority's inability to settle the rent strike and its lack of managerial control of the situation and the authority, the panel offered their full support to Harold Gibbons and the Teamsters Union. HUD reported being "impressed" with Local 688's housing expertise with the Council Plaza development and sent a letter to Mayor Cervantes asking that "full consideration be given to the possibility that the management and operation of the total housing program be turned over to the Teamsters Union."⁵⁴ Bolstered by this endorsement Gibbons sought the Mayor's approval to negotiate as he saw fit. Receiving official approval from the Mayor in August, Gibbons took steps to unite the city's top business and community leaders behind a proposed settlement and created a civic partnership to administer public housing in St. Louis, the St. Louis Civic Alliance for Housing. An agreement was reached between the tenant strikers, the public housing authority and the city on October 29, 1969 that not only rolled back rents but also handed over administration of public housing to the newly formed business-labor-community partnership. The Civic Alliance for Housing, largely managed by Local 688 and a close Gibbons aide, managed public housing in St. Louis for the next two years. The alliance was able to improve the physical aspects of public housing by obtaining necessary funds from HUD and gaining building trade agreements from local unions for lower maintenance costs and help promote tenant participation, much like the Council Plaza concept. By April of 1970, HUD secretary George Romney was praising the management of the Civic Alliance for installing new competency and stabilization into a failing system.⁵⁵

The design concept of Council Plaza stands as a representative design signifying the changes in community development specifically for the elderly in St. Louis during a dismal period for local public housing. By the concentrated efforts of Mr. Gibbons and through the continued support of Local 688, the construction of Council Plaza fulfilled a critical need in the city's senior housing accommodations and resulted in a higher quality of independent living for the elderly and contributed to the health, and vitality of its residents, the surrounding area and the stabilization of local public housing. It continues to project its original character, setting and design although in much need of repair. The current owners have plans on repairing and rehabilitating the building for commercial, retail and residential functions.

⁵⁴ University Missouri at St. Louis. AJC Collection. Box 52, Correspondence from Edgar M. Ewing to A.J. Cervantes, July 31, 1969.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Bussel.

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St. Louis, MO

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Council Plaza
St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of Council Plaza are shown as the highlighted area on the accompanying map entitled "Site Plan." (See Section 7, p. 5) It is bounded on the west by South Grand, on the north and east by Forest Park Avenue, and on the south by Interstate 64 E.

Boundary Justification:

The current district boundaries encompass the nine acre tract historically associated with the design, construction and history of Council Plaza.

Photographs:

The following information is the same for all photos:

Council Plaza

St. Louis [Independent City], Missouri

Photographer: Melinda R. Winchester

Date: July 2005

Negatives on file with: Melinda R. Winchester, Lafser & Associates
2285 CR 316, Jackson MO 63755

Photos:

1. 212 S. Grand, Circular Garage, Facing west
2. 212 S. Grand & 300 S. Grand, and parking lot, facing west.
3. 300 S. Grand and primary entrance into district, facing southwest.
4. 300 S. Grand, inner courtyard, facing east.
5. 300 S. Grand, inner courtyard, facing west.
6. 300 S. Grand, fountain, facing south.
7. Connecting walkway, facing southeast
8. 300 & 310 S. Grand, view of sculpture work on west elevation, facing east
9. 300 & 310 S. Grand, facing south.



720 000 FEET
(ILL.)

4279

38°37' 30"
90°15' 00"

Council Plaza
St. Louis [Ind City],
Missouri
15/740755/4279072
15/740060/4279525
15/740720/4279535

TM Readings from
Alec Repair
Software

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
in cooperation with U.S. Corps of Engineers

Compiled by planetable surveys 1930 and 1933. Revised from
imagery dated 1952. Field checked 1954. Revised from
imagery dated 1993. PLSS and survey control current as
of 1954. Map edited 1996. Contours not revised
Contours that conflict with revised planimetry are dashed

North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and
blue 1000-meter ticks: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 15
10 000-foot ticks: Illinois (west zone) and Missouri (east zone)
Coordinate Systems of 1983

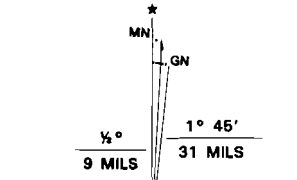
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed
corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27
for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic
Survey NADCON software

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map

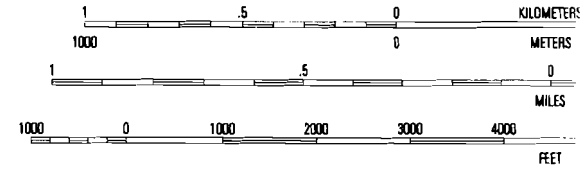
2 280 000 FEET (ILL.)

12° 30"

SCALE 1:2



UTM GRID AND 1996 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



CONTOUR INTERVAL
SUPPLEMENTARY CONTOUR
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, CO
ILLINOIS GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, SPRINGFIELD, IL
AND DIVISION OF GEOLOGY, ST. LOUIS, MO
MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND