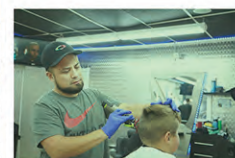


Reflecting ON 2021



Invest STL offers our 2021 reflection from a place of gratitude and growth. We have come a long way as we set the tone for the journey ahead. 2021 presented our growing team and vision with the opportunity to look inward and cultivate our organizational place and personality within this story that we share with St. Louis and all her residents. We have been refining our identity, dialing in our purpose, carefully considering how we will go about this journey toward a St. Louis where every neighborhood is a chosen place to live, raise children and grow old. This is our vision and the touchstone for our newly developed Theory of Change, which gathers all of those internal efforts and systematically lays out our path forward. We will share some more elements from our TOC here, including our mission + guiding principles, which help keep us in stride as we step into our newly defined way of being.

This internal work went deep, and it also went out into the community. It shows up in our team meetings, on our zoom calls with partners and residents, at our neighborhood events and gatherings, in panel discussions, and in the media. For Invest STL, 2021 was also an active year of collaboration with our partners, growing our relationships and resources to better suit our neighborhoods' needs, priorities, and visions. We saw the Neighborhood Solidarity Fund continue to have a substantial impact on small businesses, supporting restaurants, retail, care centers and personal care salons. Our Neighborhood Solidarity Partners continue to grow and define the multi-dimensional role they play with our Neighborhood Anchor Capacity Building Investees. Shout out, Vontriece + Shannon! We welcomed to the team our first Policy Design + Activation Partner, Michelle Witthaus, who has been organizing an innovative approach to wealth building, rooted in investments for people. Preventing displacement by investing in people is a concept that has yet to be thoroughly explored. It is one of the many ways we intend to facilitate investments in the power of people and their neighborhoods to develop communities of justice and opportunity in places that continue to endure the legacy of systemic anti-Black racism. This is our mission and the heart of the matter. Reflecting on 2021, we see a flash of what that looks like, a hunch crystallizes, and we envision how to go about the journey ahead. In that flash, we take the leap!

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A Year Devoted

As a community, we've experienced and witnessed a lot in recent years. In our own ways, we've pivoted, shifted gears, mobilized, and kept our heads above water to stay afloat. Perpetual motion to keep with the times. Often, we forget to take an intentional breath—the kind that stills time, expands space, and quiets the endless streaming thoughts and questioning of what we should and shouldn't do.

For Invest STL, 2021 was a year devoted to collecting ourselves as an organization to breathe and think deeply about how and where we show up and with and for whom. We were supported in carving out the space to challenge ourselves in exploring where we are equipped to step up and where we need to fall back, where we are gifted and experienced and where we still have much to learn. While in some ways it felt like we suspended movement and time for our organization, it was all in service of ordering our steps for the present and future. Soon, we'll be sharing what the past year's learnings AHA!d for us, as we move confidently on the path of our vision.

In the meantime, we'll share this: We are grateful for the space and support we had to gather our thoughts and get clear on our mission. These days, it feels like a privilege to pause when in fact steadying our rhythm is essential to keeping time and direction. As humans, if we ever find ourselves disoriented in a body of water, continuous stroking or paddling will only move us in circles—leaving us all the more exhausted and desperate, yet no closer to our destination. As a community, we are in a vast moment of opportunity, previously unseen resourcing, and potentially reckoning that heals. Absent the chance—the will—to intentionally sit still and take in what lies before us, we risk going nowhere fast while exhausting the hope of what could have been. Motivated by our learnings in the last year, we the people of Invest STL are committed to being spacemakers and time stretchers so that people and collectives anchoring the everyday big work on the ground within our community have the essential support to reflect, unload, dream, and ready themselves for the kind of motion that doesn't repeat cycles but gives way to generational change. What that looks like? Stay in touch.

In community,



Dara Eskridge

NEIGHBORHOOD SOLIDARITY FUND Small Business LIFT Spotlight

One of the ways that the Neighborhood Solidarity Fund supports equitable neighborhood development is through Small Business LIFT Investments. We took a closer look at a segment of those investments and invited some of the business owners to help us understand how the support impacted their businesses. The additional awards for capital + safety improvements made a substantial impact on the great majority of businesses that received the funds.

84% of the businesses that received the awards
(47 out of 56) reported that they are still active
and able to continue doing business as of July 2021.



In the words of Tameka Stigers, owner of Locs of Glory, “Locs of Glory is active, and we have been able to continue working and hiring. The investment helped keep us afloat and we are making an effort to work with the funds that are coming in and trying to not rely on grant funding. **I was working with a business consultant through SBDC before COVID and am now getting back to that, which is a good sign because I’m starting to feel like I can look ahead. Bottom line, we are still open! I’m grateful to be here and support my staff and offer our services to the community.** I’ve been in business for 12 years and I’m interested in seeing a workshop on what’s next once the COVID funds run down. I am an advocate for small businesses and want the training and tools to be available for myself and others.”

NEIGHBORHOOD SOLIDARITY PARTNERS A Unique Role + Approach

At Invest STL our Neighborhood Solidarity Partners play a special role in bringing to fruition the fruits of our investments. Our NSPs provide a patient and flexible tone, where listening and learning are favored practices, and the question, “how can we help?” offers a consistent presence. NSP’s bring a responsiveness to the conversation and facilitate a more effective and meaningful investment. Vontriece + Shannon have also begun the work of building out systems to support our current Neighborhood Anchor Capacity Building Investees, shaping these systems to align with equitable practices and our Theory of Change.

We hosted an Investee Kickoff gathering to bring our capacity building teams together from Cornerstone Corporation, in the West End + Visitation Park neighborhoods, and Dutchtown South Community Corporation, in the vibrant South St. Louis neighborhoods of Dutchtown, Gravois Park, Marine Villa, + Mt. Pleasant. At the kickoff Vontriece + Shannon shared our Theory of Change, outlined the role of the Neighborhood Solidarity Partner, brainstormed guidelines for our partnership and continued assessing progress against the Investee’s Visioning Tool. Vontriece observed, **“The Theory of Change resonated with our partners, not just in an aspirational way, as what they want to see, but also in alignment with how we have already been moving and showing up. We were able to deepen our understanding of our role as we shared the ethos and philosophy of our roles with partners and worked out some complexities of our work as a team.”**

Treena Thompson serves on the board of Cornerstone and is a West End resident advising the West End + Visitation Park Steering Committee. Treena is a champion of community voice, and she calls us to honor that voice by taking it a step further. Part of helping people feel heard is pushing folks to respond to what’s being heard - to reframe, to rethink a more effective, meaningful approach.

Treena talked about her journey with Invest STL during a panel discussion, in January, on Neighborhoods in Transition: Development and Community Self-Determination at the FOCUS STL Digital Campus. She offered, **“In hearing Invest STL’s mission... they didn’t start that way. They have been changing their approach and worked intentionally to change. A real good facilitator goes a long way. Those skills are so important. You need to be able to hear people, try to understand what’s being said, but also incorporate what’s being heard into the work. Invest STL showed up in this way. When we said, “We need a pause; this isn’t working for us;” instead of saying, “But this is the timeline,” they said, “How can we help?” And then they walked with us through the pause and helped us find a way forward. It was transformational for Invest STL and our residents.”**

NEIGHBORHOOD SOLIDARITY PARTNERS A Unique Role + Approach

Treena adds, “The West End + Visitation Park are in a prime spot for new opportunities. Because the residents that are least engaged are the most impacted, we see a need to understand different perspectives and the different needs people have. Now we address that challenge with a collective process, engaging community voices and building a collective vision. **As we moved into the phase of selecting a planning partner, we were able to invite West End + Visitation Park residents into the process, including access to the live candidate interviews, giving them the ability to ask questions directly of the candidates, and provide feedback via chat and surveys. Our residents helped select our planning partner, YARD.”**

In partnership with Invest STL’s Neighborhood Solidarity Partner, the Steering Committee created a resident-led process in which they launched an RFP, interviewed, and selected a new planning partner. One powerful way of moving differently and broadening our sense of how we include and respond to the needs of our neighbors and neighborhoods. Dubbed WeCollab, the neighborhood plan development launched with a kickoff event in October in Ivory Perry Park. Since the kickoff, there has been ongoing engagement of residents, business owners, elected officials and other stakeholders.

Every neighborhood is at its own unique stage of development and that means each neighborhood has unique needs and opportunities for community involvement. In April of 2021, Dutchtown South Community Corporation supported community involvement in the selection process for their new executive director. Invest STL was curious about what we could learn from DSCC’s innovation in their process and invited some of the folks involved to explore with us what had happened, through an exercise called Story Harvesting. We gained a lot of perspective through our collective retelling, revealing patterns and signals that only stories can contain. These stories let us know that this was the right process for DSCC and pointed out that an ecosystem of engaged actors was aligned and ready to play a collaborative role in this important decision, part of how the process was able to succeed. The process created a bridge between the community’s core values, the organization, and the candidates applying for the position. The community’s presence in the zoom interviews got the attention of the then candidate, Annissa McCaskill, now the Executive Director of DSCC. Annissa reflected, **“Seeing the open invite to the community for the final interview on Facebook made it real. I understood the community’s investment and voice in the process.”** Community involvement has become a bigger piece of who DSCC is, and it was clear that community was the benchmark of the organization – at the start of the process and reiterated throughout.

Introducing our Theory of Change

Before we set out to develop our Theory of Change, we had already established a strong framework for understanding our role and stance. The framework of people, power, place, and systems has been woven into our organizational mind-set and influenced our approach to the question of change and what our role can be in that change. Creating our Theory of Change represented a hefty collective effort and achievement in 2021. Our board, leadership, and team members all helped to shape our TOC, the bedrock for our leap forward. Invest STL will offer a complete look at our TOC coming up in 2022. For now, you can get familiar with Invest STL's emerging outlook by previewing our mission + vision and get to know a couple of our guiding principles.

Mission:

Invest STL facilitates investment in the power of people and their neighborhoods to develop communities of justice and opportunity in places that continue to endure the legacy of systemic anti-Black racism.

Vision:

Every St. Louis neighborhood is a chosen place to live, raise children and grow old.

Guiding Principles:

- We are motivated by the belief that every person deserves to live in a neighborhood in which they can create the life they want, and we are grounded in the conviction that anything less is unacceptable.
- We are guided by an activist spirit while mobilizing institutional resources.
- We are committed to rigorous self-examination and transparency about our successes, failures, and learning.
- We are dedicated to untethering the past from what's possible in the future by refusing to accept the restraints of generations of systemic anti-Black racism.
- We act with urgency, because the un confronted injustices of generations of anti-Black systemic racism continue to compound with time.
- We elevate lived experience and use evidence-based learning without being bound by it.
- We acknowledge and address generations of harm created by systemic anti-Black racism, particularly harm created in the name of community development.
- We measure success in multiple ways that reflect the complexity of this work.

NEIGHBORHOOD SOLIDARITY FUND Small Business LIFT Spotlight

Most of the active businesses we talked with reported using the Small Business LIFT Investments to support expenses including rent, payroll, business updates, and safety improvements while revenues were low due to closures and/or drops in clients to serve.

Many of the active businesses are still finding the recovery process to be challenging, though the funding support has helped keep the doors open and the lights on which will give them the opportunity to maintain their businesses and services.



One of those business owners offers us a perspective that includes owning multiple businesses and recognizing her family's influence on her entrepreneurial spirit. Michelle Ross is the owner of Kamikaze Kutz, in The Ville, she rents her store from her mother, turning that expense into another type of investment. Michelle also owns Brighter Futures Daycare in Dutchtown where she says, "the funding helped a great deal. We used the funds for payroll and PPE safety supplies. We were able to keep all of our employees on payroll with some cuts to their hours. We are still struggling and not back at full capacity yet." This picture doesn't look all that different from what Michelle sees at the salon on MLK. "We are open for business, but not at all at full capacity. With the pandemic we went to online appointments and a lot of our clients have not adapted to that yet, because many of our clients are older and are not familiar with the online process. The funds were used to support our expenses in the way of rent, payroll, and integrating the appointment app. **It's been tough. If we don't cut, we don't eat. I've been in business for 13 years and I feel like I am back at square one and starting over on day one. I run a few other businesses and that helps pull us through, along with the support from Invest STL. I am grateful.**"

Expanding the Neighborhood Toolbox Resources + Information + Collaboration

Earlier we explored one of the newer resources available in the Neighborhood Toolbox, Story Harvesting, and saw how creating a structure for listening, telling, and sharing stories can yield valuable insight.

The [Community Investment Connector](#) portal provides another way of seeing the development landscape and facilitates connections between development projects, businesses, investors, nonprofits, and technical assistance providers. The portal was developed by the Opportunity Exchange in partnership with Invest STL, Greater St. Louis Inc., and St. Louis Development Corporation. SLDC Chief of Staff, Daffney Moore explains, **“I am excited to see the Opportunity Zone project platform reimagined and transformed into a new portal. The St. Louis Community Investment Connector will help spur economic development throughout St. Louis neighborhoods. This portal creates greater collaboration, information, and resources to investors and residents.”**

Our partners who helped deliver the [Neighborhood Organization Map](#) continue to update and refine the tool’s usefulness. We caught up with one of the map originators, Dana Malkus, and a few folks who use the map regularly. Dana is an Associate Dean for Experiential Education, Clinical Professor, and Director, Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic at Saint Louis University School of Law, where she works to help residents understand the tools available to work collectively. Dana offers us a before and after picture, “Before the map we were relying on who was coming, to gather an awareness of who is out there. Now with the map, well, the map is useful in getting a much better analysis of where existing groups are, making better client choices, connecting people to neighborhood groups and reviving neighborhood groups. That’s improving our ability to support people and places. **We can better collectively work together if there is a structure people trust. Helping neighborhood groups understand the power they have and take action, that is neighborhood driven process.”**

Cecelia Dvorak is a City Planning Executive at the Planning and Urban Design Agency. Cecelia refers to the map pretty constantly, “around potential development, usually in a zoning request, when you have to ask, ‘Have you spoken to the Alderperson? Talked to the neighborhood association?’ **Now I can share a link to the map with contact information to reach out. So, the map is quite useful in that way.”**



Expanding the Neighborhood Toolbox Resources + Information + Collaboration

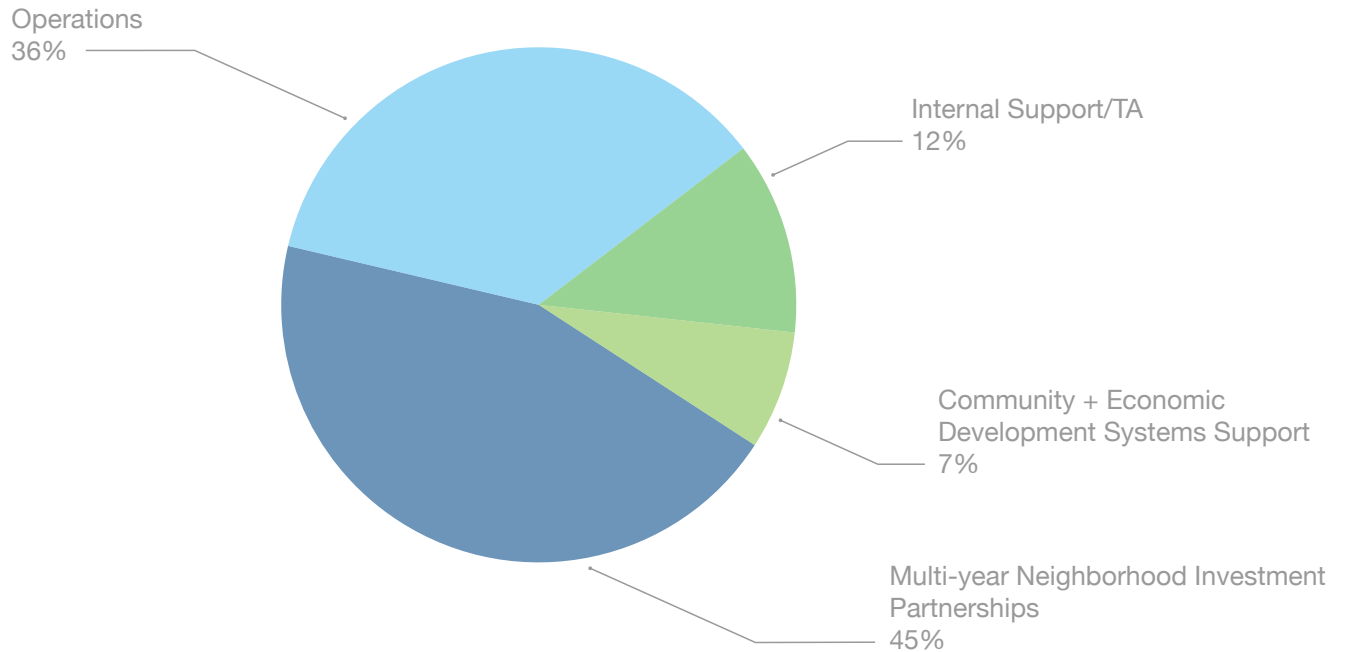
Alexa Seda also works at PDA, as a Senior Planner, Alexa used the map during the City’s “roadshow” to get feedback about their neighborhood planning strategy. “It is so helpful to have one system with all the neighborhood associations, to target and coordinate our efforts to go to neighborhood meetings, to try and reach the ‘everyday resident,’ to learn as much as we could. **I refer to the map to address folks' questions. The map becomes an engine of information. It's part of our workflow now.**” The “roadshow” rolled on from January to September 2021, and the map was used to get in touch with folks, they talked with over 300 people, presented to Community Builders Network, the Vacancy Collaborative, and others. Alexa adds, “We got feedback and incorporated that into the strategy. **I love it! I hope it becomes a tool that a lot more people can use as part of a larger collection of resources in our toolbox. We are beginning a rebuilding of our civic process and more active participation is key to that.**”

Tashara Earl is part of that wave of energy that Alexa calls out, redeveloping our civic process and dreaming a new way forward. Tashara lives in St. Louis City, near North Broadway, in Baden where she now, as a young adult, owns her childhood home. She lived in Atlanta for a while, but is now back home, in many senses. Since 2019 Tashara has served as the President of ROBA: Revitalization of Baden Association. She also completed the Neighborhood Leadership Academy and Fellowship, the training helped to develop her interest in civic leadership, and she began as a Vista with the Vacancy Collaborative in 2021. Her background in radio and entertainment are also part of her central focus as she pursues her second master’s degree, this one in Media Communication. You can see all this effort and momentum converging when Tashara explains, **“There is a perspective that I have and I want to share it with the world.”**

Tashara’s Auntie is the owner of a hair salon on North Broadway in Baden. It’s not there anymore and that gives Tashara some perspective and furthers her drive, **“I want to create opportunities that come back to my neighborhood. I’m here to help with this.”** Being familiar with the map helps Tashara identify community partners and provides information to connect with them, “you know that they are there and who they are.” Getting residents and city officials aware of each other was an important step that supported collaboration on the neighborhood planning process in North Point and Baden. She is also interested in how innovations can produce greater accessibility and spawn more inclusive collective action. **“As a resident, you see we have different generations over here, and people like to receive information differently too. We have to be effective in communicating to that difference, in experience, preference, and outlook.”** When asked to consider how else the map could serve her neighborhood, Tashara quickly dreamt up, “It would also be nice to have a welcoming process, like a neighborhood onboarding process.” Imagine that. Many of us are aware of the benefits of onboarding in an employment context, what if we welcomed and supported neighborhood residents with similar attention and regard?

Amidst all the people that find a use for the Neighborhood Toolbox, we are seeing a wealth of activity that is growing our capacity to build and leverage the skills, resources, and connections of an even greater number of neighborhood leaders. All organizing and aligning our actions towards a just, powerful future.

Sharing the Fiscal Picture



Extrenal with St. Louis Community + Ecosystem

Multi-year Neighborhood Investment Partnerships (including 3rd party technical assistance)	\$590,308
Community + Economic Development Systems Support	\$98,799
External Total	\$689,107

Internal @ Invest STL

Operations	\$476,554
Internal Support/TA	\$160,600
Internal Total	\$637,154

Total	\$1,326,261
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Leadership Board Members

Amelia Bond

President and Chief Executive Officer
St. Louis Community Foundation

Karishma Furtado

Research & Data Catalyst
Forward through Ferguson

Karl Guenther

Assistant Vice Chancellor of
Economic & Community Development
University of Missouri-Saint Louis

Brian Phillips

Executive Director & Assistant Vice Chancellor
Washington University Medical Center
Redevelopment Corporation

Blake Strobe

Executive Director
Arch City Defenders

Zachary Boyers

Chairman & Chief Executive Officer
U.S. Bancorp Community
Development Corporation

Loura Gilbert

Former Vice President of
Community Development
Commerce Bank

Nicole Hudson

Assistant Vice-Chancellor
Academy for Diversity & Inclusion
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