Local Housing Advocacy During the Pandemic

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May 5, 2020
Short-Term Housing Policy Goals (partial list)

- Eviction & foreclosure moratoria
- Rental assistance
- Services for people who are unhoused
  - Via shelters, hotels, & encampments
- Racial equity in all of the above
SUMMARY

(1) Coordinate inside & outside strategies

(2) Build solidarity across campaigns & issues

(3) Follow the lead of those directly affected

(4) Protest is still possible while social distancing
   • Be safe, get creative, use art and cars
Inside Strategies

• Working through existing channels, structures
• More dependent on power elite
• Geared toward pragmatism
• Risk: Cooptation
Outside Strategies

• Disruptive tactics
• Building power from the bottom up
• Geared toward the visionary: expanding notions of what is possible, drawing public attention
• Risk: Marginalization
the purpose of the direct action is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963)
“Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
ArchCity Defenders Coalition Demands

SIGN THE PETITION

COVID-19 RESPONSE

PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MISSOURI

ArchCity Defenders
Action St. Louis
St. Louis University Civil Litigation Clinic
Missouri State Public Defender System
Roderick & Solange MacArthur Justice Center
Close the Workhouse Campaign
Coalition Against Police Crimes and Repression
Organization for Black Struggle
Forward Through Ferguson
Faith for Justice
Generate Health
Empower MO
The Center for Growing Justice

Youth Council for Positive Development
Grassroots Accountability Movement
Metropolitan Congregations United
Missouri Faith Voices
MICA Project
National Lawyers Guild - St. Louis
ACLU of Missouri
The Bell Project - St. Louis
STL Street Medics
Dutchtown South Community Corporation
Deaconess Foundation
WePower
Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice
Recent Strategies for Policy Advocacy in St. Louis

• Inside/Outside Iterations

• Regular communication across insiders in organizations and government:
  • To stay in the loop on positive & negative developments during a time of rapid change
  • To not duplicate efforts
  • To inform the outside game
**WINS:** Eviction Moratoria (as of May 5)

- Existing eviction judgments
  - **STL City:** Judge Burlison, 22nd Judicial Circuit
    Sheriff shall not execute through at least May 22
  - **STL County:** Judge Burton, 21st Judicial Circuit
    Sheriff shall not execute (no end date mentioned)
- New eviction dockets
  - **Statewide:** Judge Draper (State Supreme Court):
    Eviction courts closed through at least May 17
- Nation-wide: Moratorium on evictions & foreclosures for properties with federally-backed loans through May 17
WIN: Saving City’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund from $1 Million Cut
In the works: Use of federal funds (CDBG & ESG) to provide short-term rental assistance, targeted using racial equity lens
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Targeting Lenders & Banks: SLEHCRA Coalition

STL COVID-19 Calls to Action.

We are calling on all banks and lenders to immediately institute:

- Moratorium on all foreclosures & foreclosure-related evictions.
- Moratorium on consumer & business credit payments.
- No late fees for borrowers impacted by COVID.
- Offer payment accommodations for all loans.

For the full list of calls to action and COVID-19 resources visit: https://www.slehcra.org/
Statewide Housing Advocacy: KC Tenants Coalition

**ACTION**

- **Petition for Rent Zero and MORE**
  We have launched a petition calling on the Governor of Missouri to: 1) Institute a rent/mortgage suspension; 2) Enact an immediate, comprehensive statewide eviction/foreclosure moratorium; 3) Ban utility shut-offs and mandate universal service; 4) Provide homes and expanded services for people experiencing homelessness. Sign the petition if you support these demands, and if you want to get more involved.

- **Organizing Toolkit**
  We have developed a toolkit for organizing during the COVID time. The toolkit includes: tenant union organizing steps, elements of strategic campaigns, tips for organizing a rent strike, and template letters, meeting agendas, and more.
The Close the Workhouse Campaign

CLOSE THE WORKHOUSE ORGANIZING CHECKLIST

Now more than ever, we must put pressure on our elected officials to close the Workhouse. Due to COVID-19, the St. Louis City government has restricted gatherings to no more than 10 people; yet there are still around 130 people caged in the Workhouse. This hypocrisy cannot go unchallenged. Below are some things that you can do from your quarantine to hold our officials accountable:

1. Contact Mayor Lyda Krewson and ask her why she refuses to close the Workhouse, even though she has restricted all public gatherings to no more than 10 people:
   - Call: 314-622-3381, email: krewson@stlouisco.gov, Twitter: @LydaKrewson, FB: @LydaSTL, Instagram: @LydaKrewson
2. Mayor Lyda Krewson is hosting daily FB live streams called #LydaLive on her FB page, where she discloses City and COVID-19 updates as well as answers questions left by viewers. She normally starts these live streams at around 3:00pm, Tune-in here: https://www.facebook.com/LydaSTL and ask questions about the Workhouse in the comments like:
   - How can the City possibly maintain the safety of detainees with the threat of COVID-19 and the City’s order of no gatherings larger than 10 people?
   - How can the City justify keeping the Workhouse open when it has a capacity of 1138 people and currently only has around 130 people?
3. Contact Public Safety Director Jessie Edwards and ask him how plans to ensure safety for those in City jails with the high risk of COVID-19:
   - Call: 314-622-3381, email: edwards@stlouisco.gov
4. Contact President of the Board of Alderman Louis Reed and ask him why the Board is not meeting during this important time, and what is his plan for convening the BDA:
   - Call: 314-622-4114, email: reed@stlouisco.gov, Twitter: @LouisReedSTL, Instagram: @LouisReed
5. Contact Comptroller Darlene Green to thank her for her support of closing the Workhouse and ask her to urge her colleagues, Mayor Krewson and President Reed, to close the Workhouse and use the $16 million to help the community in this public health crisis:
   - Call: 314-622-4395, email: green@distrstlouis-mo.gov, Twitter: @ComptRre, FB: @ComptRre
6. Contact your Alder and ask them to urge President Reed to convene the BDA as well as to support Resolution 205 to defund the Workhouse:
   - Find your Alder here: https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/elected-officials
     - Call: 314-622-3227, list of Alder emails/twitter handles here: https://uncc-space.com/documents/615c89a5-1b05-40d4-9121-f2c2c437e4a9\%20(a)%20 sewa\%20(p)\%20file\%20sharing
7. Contact the City Government and ask why the Workhouse is still open, even though gatherings larger than 10 people are not permitted:
   - Twitter: @STLCityGov, FB: @CitySTLins, Instagram: @stlcitygov
8. Contact the City Health Department and ask why the Workhouse is still open, even though gatherings larger than 10 people are not permitted:
   - Twitter: @CitySTLDOH, FB: @CitySTLDOH
9. Check our social media pages daily and share/re-tweet our content:
   - FB: @ClosetheWorkhouse, Twitter: @CLOSEWorkhouse, Instagram: @CloseTheWorkhouse, YouTube: Close the Workhouse
10. Send this checklist to a friend and complete 1-10 together!

#CLOSETHEWORKHOUSE #CLOSEWORKHOUSE #CTW2020
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Photo credit: Christopher Smith for New York Times “How to Protest When You’re Ordered Not to Gather”
For Updates & To Get Involved in St. Louis Region

CHECK OUT THE NEW ST. LOUIS ADVOCACY HUB
POLICY DEMANDS, CALLS TO ACTION, COMMUNITY RESOURCES

STLCOVIDHUB.ORG
A COLLABORATION FROM ARCHCITY DEFENDERS, ACTION ST. LOUIS, AND THE ST. LOUIS AMERICAN
Organizations to Follow/Support

• ArchCity Defenders
• Close the Workhouse Campaign
• Empower Missouri
• KC Tenants
• Legal Services of Eastern Missouri
• National Community Reinvestment Coalition
• National Low Income Housing Coalition
• STL Equal Housing & Opportunity Council (EHOC)
• Tent Mission STL
“The insider position—be that inside of Congress, unions or interest and advocacy groups—requires risk and courage to be in or near the centers of power but to remain loyal, not to the machine, but to the political project of transformative social change.”

Richard Moser (2016)
“What is the Inside/Outside Strategy?”