

GREATER ST. LOUIS INC.

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St. Louis Private-Sector Led Economic Development Organizations Agree to Combine to Drive Inclusive Economic Growth

Greater St. Louis, Inc. Will Double-Down on Commitment to Job Creation & Equity

ST. LOUIS, October 29, 2020 – In a transformative move designed to drive inclusive growth for St. Louis with a unified voice, a bold agenda and as one metropolitan area anchored by a vibrant urban core, the leaders of five organizations officially announced today they will come together to form one flagship economic development institution. The St. Louis Regional Chamber, AllianceSTL, Civic Progress, Downtown STL, Inc. and Arch to Park will combine their strengths into one organization under the name [Greater St. Louis, Inc.](#) The group’s inclusive growth agenda will focus on creating jobs, expanding equity and improving St. Louis’ global competitiveness.

“For the past several months, our organizations have been working closely together in the same building with most of us on the same floor, and that strengthened the spirit of collaboration among our teams,” says Tom Chulick, current President and CEO of the St. Louis Regional Chamber, who previously announced his retirement at the end of the year. “The leadership of our organizations began exploring the benefits of making that collaboration permanent through an integration.”

The design of Greater St. Louis, Inc. is adapted from other best-in-class regions, some larger and smaller than St. Louis, including Charlotte, Denver, Des Moines, Indianapolis and Pittsburgh. Under this new model, effective January 1, 2021, Greater St. Louis, Inc. will serve the 15-county St. Louis metropolitan region as a unified flagship organization with a bold strategy and agenda. Under Greater St. Louis, Inc., four affiliates will execute highly focused strategic functions: AllianceSTL (business attraction); ChamberSTL (public policy and advocacy); CentralCitySTL (strengthening Downtown and the urban core); and the Greater St. Louis Foundation (funding to support Greater St. Louis, Inc.’s charitable activities). Greater St. Louis, Inc. will be led by a Chief Executive Officer. Each affiliate will be led by a President, who will report to the CEO of Greater St. Louis, Inc.

Members of current organizations, such as the Regional Chamber, Downtown STL, Inc. and Civic Progress, will transition to be Greater St. Louis, Inc. members and will receive enhanced member services and engagement opportunities to help shape and implement the agenda. The organization will welcome businesses of all sizes to join as new members. Businesses may sign up to receive information about membership on the Greater St. Louis, Inc. [website](#).

Add One

“We must work together as a unified metro area across both sides of the river to help businesses and communities grow,” says Edmond Brown, Founder & President of ELB Enterprises, Inc. of Alorton, Ill., and a long-time member of the St. Louis Regional Chamber Executive Committee. “I am excited by this vision of unity and inclusive growth to address some of the inequities in our community, and I look forward to seeing social and economic parity in the region.”

Civic Progress, which helped build the capacity of many of the current organizations since its inception in 1953, will wind down operations at the end of the year. Its current President, Tom Santel, will retire but serve as a consultant to Greater St. Louis, Inc. during a transition period. “The establishment of Greater St. Louis, Inc. is a tremendous step forward that will enhance our region’s economic competitiveness and position it for strong inclusive growth in the future,” says Warner Baxter, current Chair of Civic Progress. “This combination is consistent with Civic Progress’ legacy of taking bold steps to drive economic development for the St. Louis region.”

The Board Chairs of the current organizations have asked Enterprise Holdings Executive Chairman, civic leader and philanthropist Andrew C. Taylor to serve as Greater St. Louis, Inc.’s Founding Chair. “I am proud to take on this role because I strongly believe we need this new integrated approach to economic development to advance growth and prosperity,” says Taylor, who currently chairs Arch to Park. “I love St. Louis, and I want our region to thrive for future generations.”

Jason Hall, the current Chief Executive Officer of Arch to Park, will serve as Greater St. Louis, Inc.’s CEO. Valerie Patton, currently Senior Vice President, Inclusion & Talent Attraction, at the St. Louis Regional Chamber, will serve as Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer of Greater St. Louis, Inc. and President of the Greater St. Louis Foundation. Hall and Patton were selected by the current Board Chairs of the combining organizations. Hall, Patton and Taylor have taken steps to incorporate Greater St. Louis, Inc.

“It is an honor to lead Greater St. Louis, Inc.,” says Hall, a native of the Metro East who has an extensive background and track record in economic development, public policy and urban core revitalization. “Through this combination of strengths of five existing organizations, we are taking a bold step in renewing our commitment to being a vibrant, high-growth region that creates more opportunities for all. Economic transformation requires leadership, vision, and a long-term commitment to working together for shared outcomes. Greater St. Louis, Inc. gives us an opportunity to work together in the decades ahead to engage more people and businesses so that we can all achieve the ambition we have for St. Louis together.” Hall previously served as Director and Deputy Director of the Missouri Department of Economic Development and as Executive Director of the Missouri Technology Corporation.

Add Two

“Greater St. Louis, Inc. will be a catalyst for increasing the number of quality jobs while also implementing strategies to achieve broad-based prosperity,” says Patton. “At the heart of Greater St. Louis, Inc. will be a focus on integrating principles of diversity, equity and inclusion into every element of the organization’s growth agenda. We must ensure that the broadest range of people and places benefit from economic growth. This work will make meaningful contributions to closing unacceptable racial disparities.” Patton is the founding Executive Director of the St. Louis Business Diversity Initiative, which helps professional people of color address the challenges they face in the workplace. She also launched the first-of-its-kind St. Louis Diverse Business Accelerator.

“Everyone is aligned around making a meaningful, positive systems-change toward inclusive economic growth,” says Ken Cella, the St. Louis Regional Chamber’s current Board Chair. “By combining our efforts, the talents, strengths and perspectives of our organizations, we believe we can enable all in our St. Louis regional family to thrive.”

Additionally, Steve Johnson will continue to lead the region’s coordinated business attraction efforts as Chief Business Attraction Officer of Greater St. Louis, Inc. and President of AllianceSTL. “The formation of AllianceSTL was an important step and investment in expanding our region’s business attraction capacity, and combining with other economic development groups. Greater St. Louis, Inc. will take that vision to a whole new level,” says Suzanne Sitherwood, the current AllianceSTL Board Chair. “We’re showing the world that St. Louis is ready to compete for new jobs, new businesses and new investment.” AllianceSTL was responsible for a major win in June, when Accenture Federal Services announced plans to open an Advanced Technology Services Center in St. Louis and bring up to 1,400 new technology jobs to the area over five years. AllianceSTL will continue to collaborate with local economic development organizations across the bistate metropolitan area to attract jobs and capital investment to St. Louis.

Missy Kelley, the current CEO of Downtown STL, Inc. will transition into a new senior role in Greater St. Louis, Inc. One of Kelley’s initial responsibilities will be transitioning current Downtown STL, Inc. stakeholders and members and communication and economic development activities into the new organization. Over the past several years, Downtown STL, Inc. and Arch to Park collaborated with a broad range of Downtown stakeholders to develop Design Downtown STL, the first comprehensive and community-led downtown plan since *Downtown Now!* in 1999. During the first year, Greater St. Louis, Inc. will work with Downtown and urban core stakeholders to define the optimal structure for leading this critical work going forward. During the interim, the work to strengthen the urban core will be carried out under a common banner of CentralCitySTL.

“Downtown St. Louis is the front door to our entire region,” says Ellen Theroff, Board Chair-elect of Downtown STL, Inc. “As we have seen in high-growth metro areas around the country, we cannot grow our region without a vibrant and growing urban core. Greater St. Louis, Inc. elevates Downtown and the urban core as a regional priority and sets a vision for inclusive growth that will have profound impacts throughout the region.”

“Downtown and the urban core are experiencing tremendous momentum, with billions of dollars of investment underway,” says David Kemper, the Chair of Arch to Park’s real estate fund. “Greater St. Louis, Inc. gives us the right platform to build on that momentum at scale.”

Add Three

Additional leaders of Greater St. Louis, Inc. will be named in the months ahead.

Prior to the five organizations combining, internationally recognized economic development expert Bruce Katz, of New Localism Associates, was developing a 10-year, metro-scale, inclusive growth plan. This ongoing planning process has engaged a broad and diverse cross-section of business, civic and economic development leaders and builds on multiple bodies of work undertaken over the past several years, including the GeoFutures Strategic Roadmap, Design Downtown STL, and 2020 Vision: An Equitable Economic Development Framework for St. Louis.

Draft recommendations are expected in late November and will be shared with the community for feedback, with the final recommendations expected later this year. It will be the region's first metropolitan plan for creating more jobs in over a decade. Civic Progress provided funding for this community planning effort last year. The plan will inform early priorities for Greater St. Louis, Inc. in 2021 and beyond.

As part of this process of shaping Greater St. Louis, Inc., an [Integration Advisory Team](#), composed of board members from the current organizations, has been formed. This team is assisting in the design of a successful integration with the goal of generating greater involvement among the business community through advisory committee members, task force members and investors from all 15 counties in the St. Louis metropolitan region.

"This type of transformation is absolutely vital for St. Louis," says Ola Ayeni, Founder & Chief Idea Officer of Claim Academy and Member of the Integration Advisory Team. "As someone who came to St. Louis having lived in other cities in the U.S., and as an immigrant, I saw a level of fragmentation that has held our region back. We need a unifying vision of one St. Louis. This is a huge step in that direction, and I urge others to roll up their sleeves and join us in this great union and transformation for all."

While the combination is not effective until January 1, 2021, starting now Greater St. Louis, Inc. leaders will engage and learn from the business community as well as others throughout the bistate region as they build out a plan to create a more competitive and inclusive, equitable economy. To learn more and to provide input, visit <https://greaterstlinc.com/>

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For photos of Andy Taylor, Jason Hall, and Valerie Patton, click [here](#).