



West Side Flats Displacement

Participatory Action Research Project

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In 2022, the West Side Community Organization conducted a series of historical interviews on the displacement of residents from the West Side Flats in the early 1960s. Now, WSCO is partnering with Research in Action to work with directly impacted community members to:

- » Advocate for recognition and **repair of the harm** enacted against the families who were displaced from the West Side Flats in 1961-1963
- » Bring into public memory the **histories and truths** of displaced families and their descendants.
- » Build solidarity and **neighborhood power to resist displacement** caused by gentrification and preserve affordability in the community as the Old West Side Flats are redeveloped
- » Inform WSCO's West Side (10-Year) **Community Plan**

WHO IS RESEARCH IN ACTION?

RIA is a Black queer female-led, multi-racial and gender-diverse social benefit corporation created to reclaim the power of research by centering community expertise at every step and driving actionable solutions for racial justice. Learn more about us and our work at researchinaction.com

WEST SIDE COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

To move this work forward, WSCO and RIA formed an advisory council made up of descendants of the West Side Flats displacement, present-day West Siders, and stakeholders from organizations that are responsible for the West Side Flats displacement. Together, the West Side Community Advisory Council (WSAC) will leverage its collective influence to interrupt the cycle of displacement in the West Side community.

So far, we have:

- » met over several months to **identify key priorities** for redress for the Flats displacement and policy recommendations to prevent present-day displacement from the West Side
- » hosted an **Open House event** to
 - hear stories of past and present-day displacement*
 - examine data that maps the historic displacement and gentrification status of the West Side*
 - collaborate on recommendations for redress and preventing further displacement and housing insecurity on the West Side*

Community Members:

- Jesus Ramirez
- Elsa Vega Perez
- Leah Garcia
- Joe Ruiz
- Alicia Lucio
- Raena Josephs
- Coral Gessner

Systems Stakeholders:

- Muneer Karcher-Ramos (City of St. Paul)
- Tonya Bauer (St. Paul Port Authority)
- Kedar Hickman (St. Paul and Minnesota Foundation)



Research in Action: Equity in Action Model

From government policies to nonprofit programs, research is used to shape our daily lives in countless ways. But, for generations, researchers have entered communities with their own agendas, extracted data from those most harmed by injustice, and released findings that are utterly removed from the people most impacted. **Research in Action's approach is radically different.** Using our proven Equity in Action model, we co-create processes that recognize and increase the inherent leadership of impacted communities and drive actionable and timely solutions that advance racial justice in ways we can see and feel in our everyday lives.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Political remedies to displaced families

- » Acknowledgment and apology from the institutions that caused displacement harm, such as the City of Saint Paul and the Saint Paul Port Authority
- » Memorialization, including plaques on historic sites on the West Side, public art memorializing community leaders, investment in a database recording displaced families

Economic remedies to descendants of the Flats displacement for lost property and wealth building opportunities.

- » Monetary reparations to displaced people and their descendants
- » A *Housing Inheritance Fund* similar to the Rondo Inheritance Fund for West Side residents to receive down payment assistance and homeowner rehabilitation
- » A neighborhood-level real estate tax paid by new home-buyers on the West Side (current West Siders/descendants are exempt from paying this tax) into an anti-displacement organizing fund

Anti-displacement organizing around policy and advocacy to advance affordability and prevent displacement from the West Side

- » Community leadership on policy to advance affordability and prevent displacement from the West Side
 - » Connection to WSCO tenant organizing, community ownership, and equitable development work
 - » Gatherings and dialogue with other historically displaced and gentrifying communities (Rondo, Midway) to share stories and build solidarity

Community building

- » Current residents: Creating spaces that nurture intergenerational connections, collaborating with community-based organizations to make space for community dialogue on racial injustice in housing
- » Future residents: Identify an organization who can orient new community members to the West Side. Ideas include: a welcome packet and outreach to new renters and homeowners about West Side history, opportunities to participate in neighborhood belonging, and strategies for making meaningful contributions to a place that they now benefit from

Informing WSCO's 10-Year Plan: Community participation in anti-displacement planning for the West Side neighborhood.

- » Affordable Housing: Supportive housing for vulnerable populations (elders, low income, disabled), new affordable rental units, home-buying assistance
- » Neighborhood Belonging: Spaces, events, resources that foster community, investment in youth (recreation centers / programs)
- » Neighborhood Infrastructure: Parks and recreation, healthy and affordable groceries, community center, preservation of the historic Lower West Side

JOIN US TO SHARE YOUR INPUT!

Additional community input sessions are coming soon!

Stay connected with WSCO for the dates and times of future opportunities for West Siders to shape the action steps for this project going forward!

Learn more at wsko.org/wsflatsgallery and researchinaction.com/wsko



WEST SIDE
community organization



RESEARCH
IN ACTION