



Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis
10th Anniversary Family Reunion
Memory and Photo Book
September 23, 2021



The Beginning of CBN

I wanted to share the story of my first meeting with Todd that I'd like to think led to the creation of CBN. So, he had contacted me, over 10 years ago, in the fall of 2010. He called and asked if we could get together. He was going out and talking to people in community development about how he could more effectively employ the Des Lee endowment fund that he was managing. We met one day over at Kaldi's in DeMun. He asked me, and I told him that we at DeSales had been involved in a couple attempts to form a network of community development organizations over the years. We'd get together informally, you know. We would periodically meet at one of the organizations and hear a little bit about what the organization was doing. Over time, we endeavored to formalize a little more. Chris Krehmeyer from Beyond Housing had the biggest staff at the time, so he'd make one of his administrators available to schedule. But over time, as we aspired to do more, it became more of a job and nobody had the time to really run an organization. This had happened with stops and starts for about 15 years or so. So I told Todd about this. My suggestion to Todd was that he consider funding a position that would help to organize and operate a network of community development organizations. He might have also heard it from others as well. Todd and others started organizing the group and allocated Des Lee funding for seed funding getting an organization off the ground, and that was really the origin story of Community Builders Network.

-Tom Pickel, DeSales Community Development



My memory is of the hard work Karl Guenther and Dr. Todd Swanstrom put in to get this organization up and running. They are to be commended.

-Kevin McKinney, St. Louis Association of Community Organizations (SLACO)



Just looking at the history and working with Todd and Karl for the last 10 years, prior to their efforts, there wasn't a network at all of community development officials. There were attempts at trying to build an informal network, but there were a bunch of starts and stops along the way. [Todd] really helped break that together and to formalize that into the Community Builders Network where there's actually a platform there. Having not only banks and foundations and city government officials realize what community development is and the importance of community development corporations—the greater region and neighborhoods that really have begun to understand the need for these community development groups, and what they hope to accomplish in these different neighborhoods. What I always say is anything that Todd and Karl is a part of always ends up becoming this formalized reality. So it started with the Community Builders Network and really from network, spun off the Vacancy Collaborative and Invest STL. And now the Anchor Action Network. It's great that these are happening now in St. Louis, that we're utilizing the models from other cities, the best approaches to these different efforts, and having duplicated efforts here in St. Louis, because of all of it.

-Brooks Goedeker, St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corporation

One of the things that I just remember when we first started CBN was that we went around and did tours with development leaders, community development organizations. We'd spend a couple hours going around to people in neighborhoods and understanding what their work was like, the challenges and the promises of it, and understanding of it, understanding who they're working with on different projects. There's so much amazing work going on. And also situations where folks might be a mile away from each other but had been over to each other's offices. Looking at it now, the number of folks who have direct relationships or are working with one another, the number of folks that got to know one another and didn't even need CBN to facilitate partnerships around something just because the relationships were there—I just think that's a special thing that's happened over the last 10 years. That kind of connected rich system of partners, knowing one another, working with one another, has laid the groundwork for collaboration, and the community development field to work together on critical issues in a way that maybe didn't exist 10 years ago.

-Karl Guenther, University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL)

I remember very early on Karl Guenther and I decided that we should go to the Community Development Agency's hearing on the annual Community Development Block Grant. I think this was even before CBN was off the ground. The grant that year was for about \$18 million. We figured there would be a big crowd so got there early. It was held in a big room at the CDA. Jill Clabour, who was the head of CDA at the time, led the meeting. I remember there was somebody there to do sign language. When we got to the room we were shocked that we were the only ones in attendance—with the exception of a graduate student from Washington University. (It might have been Stephanie Co?) Karl and I were extremely disappointed that apparently the community development groups had no voice when it came to CDBG. I would like to think things are better now and that CBN has played a role in giving community development groups more of a voice in city community development policies.

-Todd Swanstrom, University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL)



What's a memory that makes you laugh?

When a member of a development finance board asked at a public hearing, “How do you do these projects (in weak market, distressed communities)? We are always trying to get more development into these areas and we can’t find anyone to do them.” My response, “Because there is a market. There is demand. There is a shortage of quality affordable housing all over St. Louis, and we work to meet that need.” It’s amusing that such a basic concept could be so elusive.

-Rick Bonasch, Rise Community Development

Not exactly laughable, but positive... My memories of the CBN awards receptions are very positive and uplifting. There is a narrative about St. Louis out there is very negative, but the awards reception offers a stark alternative. Each year, they are a reminder that there are countless untold stories of people who are building up our region. We all need to be reminded of them and their work. For the first awards reception I attended, Hank Webber was the keynote speaker. His speech, in a nutshell, was this message—the past does not define our future. In spite of our struggles as a region, St. Louis is full of hope and opportunity. He listed other regions that were once in a similar situation as St. Louis, like Brooklyn and Seattle, but are now thriving and growing. I think about that speech a lot when I hear people despairing about the state of our region, or what they hear about our region from the local media.

-Daniel Hutti, former Graduate Research Assistant with CBN



Karl juggling at happy hour at Civil Life.

-Rachel Witt, South Grand Community Improvement District

When I received an award from CBN and my family attended. My mother always said she didn't know what I did for a living. I think most of my family didn't know. Upon receiving the award, I had the chance to introduce a mentor, Thurman "Tony" Smith to my family. He spoke some kind, supportive and encouraging words to them. It was like instantly, what I did was understood and accepted. That moment meant a lot to me.

-David Noble, Midland States Bank

A memory that makes me laugh is when Beyond Housing opened the Pagedale Save-A-Lot, and the ribbon cutting day for the opening of what was the first economic development project in the Pagedale redevelopment district and the first grocery store in this neighborhood in 50 years. And just like a beautiful big celebration for the community proving that good things

can and will continue to happen in this place and that investment is coming. Part of the opening of the grocery store was a Supermarket Sweep, which was a three-way grocery cart race between Chris Krehmeyer, the president of Beyond Housing, Mary Carter, who was the mayor of Pagedale, and Charlie Dooley, who was the St. Louis County Executive at the time. Each one of them had a grocery cart at the starting line, and they had a child inside their grocery cart, who was the collector of the items on their list. They had to run around the grocery store and collect the items, and then race to the finish line, and it was just absolutely hilarious and such a joyful way to celebrate what was just such a momentous occasion for this community.

-Jillian Guenther, U.S. Bank CDC

Overpour of wine at CBN's annual event—everyone went home feeling great, so I was told!

-Reina Stovall, Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis (CBN)

We've had Starsky Wilson and Chris Krehmeyer and other great emcees at the CBN award ceremonies, and they've done a great job. But Sal Martinez in recent years has taken the cake! Everyone always has such a good time when Sal is the master of ceremonies.

-Todd Swanstrom, University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL)



Who's someone you couldn't imagine the community development field without?

Laura Gilbert, for her years of service and thoughtful guidance.

-Rick Bonasch, Rise Community Development



Stephen Acree, who is now retired as of earlier this year.

-Brian Hurd, Rise Community Development

Laura Gilbert and Stephen Acree.

-David Noble, Midland States Bank

I would say Michael McMillan. He embodies holistic community development. He's always been a community champion fighting for economic justice, affordable housing, inclusivity, and social justice. He's a guide for those who want to serve their individual communities well.

-Angela Pinex, Spanish Lake CDC

Someone you couldn't imagine the community development field without...that's a tough one. I can't say, because you have a lot of transition in the field. I'll say that, you know, there are organizations that have been very helpful to us. And that would be Rise Community Development, and St. Louis Equity Fund. I don't think we'd be as successful as we have been without their help and assistance.

-Michael Burns, Northside Community Housing

Colleen Hafner. Colleen is sort of involved in everything, but she would never let you know how integral she is to everything that happens around our field, and the way that our field is building and improving and taking seriously what we need to be doing. She's been a longtime CBN board member, she's a board member of Tower Grove Neighborhood CDC, she worked at St. Louis Equity fund and now she's at Rise. She just is integral to everything that's happening, she's so so knowledgeable, all the way down to the technical details of how community development policy and community development practice actually works in a level of detail that's so surprising, because she is so skilled at also thinking about the big picture and the systems and the changes and the things that worked and the things that don't and why. It's just really hard to find someone who can live at that intersection and do it with such a smile, and such a grace that you don't realize how much she knows until she starts talking. So I definitely think we wouldn't be the field we were without her sort of quietly behind the scenes. I hope that she continues to be in leadership roles in our region for the rest of her career because we need her.

-Jillian Guenther, U.S. Bank CDC

Todd Swanstrom.

John McClusky.

Kay Gasen.



When's a time you saw St. Louis' community development family come together to solve a challenge?

Prop NS passage led by SLACO.
-Rick Bonasch, Rise Community Development

Launching the St. Louis Vacancy Initiative.
-Brian Hurd, Rise Community Development



The founding of the following: Community Builders Network, the Metropolitan St. Louis CRA Association, Invest STL.
-David Noble, Midland States Bank

The Vacancy Collaborative, and the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Coalition that anchored together to fully fund the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund. It later paved the way, provided the foundation for the County's program.
-Angela Pinex, Spanish Lake CDC

I think there are a number of areas of this, but one piece I can think of is around affordable housing, and people coming together for advocacy for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. I loved seeing that happen. So often you're doing advocacy against something. So this was a great time where you actually saw some action. You saw that the City of St. Louis tried to fully fund the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. I think it also raised the public awareness of how important affordable housing is and to learn about this additional vehicle, even for non-community development folks to be able to advocate for

the same thing. I started seeing affordable housing come up a lot more, whether it was the mayoral debates, or other discussions. I think another thing that was interesting to me was to see CBN and a lot of other community development partners come together to put it on mayoral forums and really just try to elevate the importance of community development on a city level.

-Stephanie Co, Beyond Housing

Something that I was involved in, which was exciting, was planning the mayoral forum, not this past election, but the previous one, that took place on Washington Avenue. It was fascinating to see so many different partners from so many different areas come together, whether or not they were in the news industry or in childcare or community development or different segments of community development come together, and really provide a robust platform for discussion. And I think that was maybe the first time something like that happened and it really created a model for how the forums have happened in this past cycle of the mayoral election.

-Constance Siu, North Newstead Association



The work around the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and getting that expanded again. It was a great moment to see both the community development field and allies that are impacted by housing issues come together—that we just need to see both the community development field, and education leaders and others come together to focus attention on this need. That is a clear example I think of folks coming together to solve challenge.

-Karl Guenther, University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL)

Another story that I think is interestingly woven in with people coming together to solve a challenge. There was the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, there are things like the Vacancy Collaborative, as well. But Invest STL also was kind of born of both insight from members' experiences and CBN trying to carry out community development, as well as learning about giving circles and other ways that people were crowdsourcing revenue around critical issues and their community, and understanding the nature of the landscape—where St. Louis's community development systems were strong, and where we needed to strengthen them. All of that kind of came together. It was an interesting mixture of people coming together to build something and solve a challenge while also learning from other communities. It's kind of interesting, a couple of items from that are tied to the story of Invest STL. Invest STL has also grown and evolved over time as well and people are continuing to try to address the resource and policy systems environment, enabling the environment for community development.

-Karl Guenther, University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL)



Is there a community development mentor who has really helped you?

Stephen Acree to challenge me never write in the passive voice.

-Rick Bonasch, Rise Community Development

Without a doubt Todd Swanstrom and Karl Guenther. They brought me on as a Graduate Research Assistant for CBN from July 2014 through May 2016 when I graduated from

UMSL. Some of my first experiences working with real-world data came through opportunities and challenges they gave me. They set me on the path of where I am today.
-Daniel Hutti, Former Graduate Research Assistant with CBN

Stephen Acree. I felt like he could be Secretary of HUD. I learned nonprofit and business management, housing development deal structuring, complex finance and accounting, public policy, and basics of law under his mentorship.
-Brian Hurd, Rise Community Development

Loura Gilbert and Stephen Acree.
-David Noble, Midland States Bank

I first started getting involved with CBN when I was an AmeriCorps VISTA. I was supporting a startup community development organization that was started by Great Rivers Greenway. I was essentially the only person on staff for the startup CDC, and as part of that we participated in CBN. They had a number of pipeline activities and capacity building pipelines, and one of them was about financial sustainability. As part of that we chose a mentor or we were assigned a mentor, which was Beyond Housing, specifically Chris Krehmeyer, who is the CEO there. He actually ended up mentoring our board members and our volunteer board members as well as me on financial stability and fundraising for our organization. A few years later I ended up working at Beyond Housing. I remember thinking, wow, this is an organization I would love to work with when my VISTA is over and it ended up working out really well. And I still work at Beyond Housing to this day, so that's a good example of how the CBN network has really provided that peer support.
-Stephanie Co, Beyond Housing



I would say another mentor who's really helped me in the community development world has been Kathy Sorkin. I think she's a lot of people's mentors but she has really especially been able to provide that support specifically for women in the community development fields, and really helping me, as I grow professionally.

-Stephanie Co, Beyond Housing



I would say the person who's receiving the [2021] lifetime achievement award, Barb [Levin], has been a big influence on my time in community development, because she was a professor of mine when I was in school, and she really emphasized the need to always talk to the community and build those relationships with community, and that being basically the foundation of the work that I do and the work that we all do.

-Constance Siu, North Newstead Association

I was fortunate. I've always been a history buff, so for me it was the two previous presidents of Northside Community Housing. I really contacted both of them and talked to them about what they wished they had done if they had remained at Northside, and so I do get to talk to them and have conversations, not in your normal mentoring sense where people are with you or you're going out for lunch and you have long conversations and things of that nature, but I still do keep in contact with the two previous presidents of the organization to get their advice and different things related to the organization.

-Michael Burns, Northside Community Housing

Chris Krehmeyer and Hank Webber, for me, have been two incredibly generous and kind and giving mentors for me and in my career. They're just incredibly valuable and knowledgeable and talented and thoughtful people in this space, who have made space for me to learn from their unique vantage points, and how they think about people and

communities and regions and what it takes to succeed, and what this region in particular needs to do differently, and needs from leaders to show up to be the best versions of ourselves. It's interesting: they're similar in the sense that they care a lot about sharing their time and their talents and their treasure for the same cause, and it's been great for me to see how they approach it from different places—on-the-ground community development, in academia with the power of a large institution. To see those similar values show up and see how they can play out different ways has been such a great learning experience for me. And I think has helped broaden the way that I think about the work too.

-Jillian Guenther, U.S. Bank CDC



When's a time when you learned about a new community development concept and found a way to implement it in your community or neighborhood?

My first time attending the National Interagency Community Reinvestment Conference. It allowed me to see multiple working models throughout the country and use that to shape my vision for what truly is possible.

-David Noble, Midland States Bank

The South Grand Boulevard Great Streets Initiative.

-Rachel Witt, South Grand Community Improvement District



Well, one thing is that I realized that we had quite a few young people that were taking care of their moms who had aged. Some of these mothers were in their 70s and 80s. And one of the things I decided to do was to shift how we were building. At first, we did these typical three bedrooms with the three bedrooms on the second floor, and I decided to just do two bedrooms on the second floor, and a bedroom on the first floor for elderly or aging relatives so that they can remain in the house and age in place. So from that point on we started building homes that allowed you to age in place, where the bedroom doors were wide enough to where if you needed a wheelchair, you could go in and out successfully, without bumping into the doorframe. The bathrooms would be wide enough to where a wheelchair can actually turn inside the bathroom, and you can walk—roll into a shower, actually. A person can be able to get right into the shower and stay in the

wheelchair. Although we're not putting stair lifts for a person to go to the second floor that's invalid-disabled, you have the reinforced walls in case the family at a later time wants to put in those stairlifts, so there'd be ramps and also steps, and people will be able to go in and out of the garage with ease and also purchase those appliances that allow people to be able to reach from a wheelchair. So those things we found out from a lead about what was going on in the community. That allows the family to stay together. The other relatives can have a bedroom on the second floor and not be in a noisy situation for the elderly or disabled relative. And then the disabled relative has the ability to live as independently as they possibly can with these amenities added.

-Michael Burns, Northside Community Housing



The Gravois-Jefferson Historic Neighborhoods Plan.

-Brian Hurd, Rise Community Development

There are two things there that I think are really interesting. The Home Screen program at Tower Grove Neighborhoods CDC is really interesting. It's a partnership with Tower Grove Neighborhoods CDC and TIAA-CREF. I'm on the board [at Tower Grove Neighborhoods CDC], Sean Spencer's the ED, and we really operate like a business with the heart of a nonprofit, like social enterprise essentially, and have built out a revenue generating model through the Home Screen program that not only accomplishes the goals of the organization around community development and neighborhood stabilization but also creates a source of revenue for us to reinvest back into the community and back into the programs and the kind of work that is in our strategic plan. I think that has been really amazing to see come to life and see someone in our sector pull off here in St. Louis, and not just read case studies of other places around the country that are doing these kinds of innovative models. Also, our partnership to create 50 units of affordable housing in the Shaw neighborhood in a market where it's really difficult to do so, in a place that doesn't qualify for a low income tax credits. So that was a really innovative partnership with a bank to create a program and product that allowed us to do that and finance that sort of economic diversity for this neighborhood.

-Jillian Guenther, U.S. Bank CDC



What's something special that happens or has happened in your neighborhood/community that deserves to be celebrated more?

There's a new restaurant owner [on South Grand] and she was so excited that she finally got her license. And I didn't give her the poster for the first pop-up this weekend on Sunday. I sent an email post reminding everyone, with some social posts and graphics, and she printed it all and put it in her window and was posting all about it. She just opened. Just the excitement of the businesses and how much we do for them, and knowing and being a resource, it's the most rewarding thing I think I can ever have in my career. No matter where I am. Knowing that people value what we do as a taxing district, and what role I play. I can see when I talk with them, even on the phone, the stress coming off them knowing I'm there just to listen and be resource and help them as much as I can. Being a business owner is lonely, and stressful, and you're learning day by day how to do everything. Knowing someone's there to hold your hand, and just look out for you and strategize, I think that's why we're such a successful taxing district is because we have a setup where no one feels alone and we have this support system. That's what makes anything successful, that's probably why a lot of community development corporations are successful—the support system, having them in these neighborhoods. Knowing that they're a resource that people can go through. That's why I was so excited when CBN was formed, so people don't feel alone anymore because the city doesn't have the resources or the staff to really help with that. The glue that really holds the city together, in my opinion, is the community development corporations and our taxing districts and businesses. We're the ones who are there for the community, to make people know they're not alone and they have a community and that there's a system and a network and organization they can go to. All the minute details—that's not the city's job. But having CDCs or taxing districts, we are the resource to help small businesses or residents or property owners who are trying to find tenants or how to be a landlord, or maybe they inherited property from a loved one who passed away and they're trying to figure out what to do. I mean, it's amazing the things I've learned from Tower Grove, or what DeSales has done throughout the years. The programs they've created and the people they've helped are amazing. And that's why we're successful as a city and as neighborhoods, is having places for people to go and be a part of.

-Rachel Witt, South Grand Community Improvement District



Pending reduction in the Board of Aldermen? Kidding.

-Rick Bonasch, Rise Community Development

In the Hyde Park Neighborhood, Spooktacular is something to celebrate. Spooktacular originally started about 7 years ago with LinkSTL (Links), a not-for-profit organization whose mission is “linking people to possibilities.” At the time, neighbors wanted trick-or-treat in their community. For many, it seems simple, but for the first time in years (or ever), kids and families had the opportunity to “just be,” and live and love within their community in common unity. The community traditionally celebrated fall events with an annual party at one of the local schools. Planning Spooktacular allowed many stakeholders (churches, schools, renters, homeowners, businesses, organizations, and city services) to all come together in community unity. The areas in the neighborhood that were vacant were filled with cars for trunk-a-treat, and homes that for decades did not experience trick-or-treaters were re-engaged. Now the event hosts its annual haunted tour, built by neighbors, for neighbors in the neighborhood’s local park, Hyde Park. While Spooktacular is a moment in time for the Hyde Park Neighborhood, it deserves to be celebrated more because it shows the heart of the community (its neighbors), and the power in community (unity of its stakeholders).

-Timetria Murphy-Watson, Urban Strategies

I work at Beyond Housing and we support 24:1 community residents. There are some resident leaders who have been a part of this community building initiative since the beginning. It definitely can be a bit more challenging to do community building in multiple communities, specifically suburbs in the County. So I think that should be celebrated. Recently we opened Carter Commons, which is a new mixed-use commercial development in Pagedale, and it's basically all comprised of Black-owned businesses. And I would love that to be celebrated more too, so more people really see how exciting this is. I think the Foundry is also amazing. I know they have sort of been talking about how they're the first food hall in the area and I'm thinking there's another food hall that is also in the area! I just don't want people to discount this one that is here in Pagedale, so it's a really exciting commercial development. The cool thing about it is it's really part of this more comprehensive community development effort in the entire area. One thing I love about working at Beyond Housing is even though there are so many different communities, Carter Commons is seen as an asset for everyone in the community. So it's not just, oh that's Pagedale's development, it's oh, this is our development, we can all participate in this and it's really exciting to be a part of it.

-Stephanie Co, Beyond Housing

The building and evolution of Cortex.

-David Noble, Midland States Bank

The turnaround and investment in the Forest Park Southeast neighborhood over the past 20 years.

-Brian Hurd, Rise Community Development



I remember my amazing chance to meet Jackie Joyner-Kersey!!! This is a community development world moment I will definitely never forget—to meet your Wheaties Box hero from childhood, and to hear and see her leadership in action at her community center in East St. Louis. So many amazing programs for kiddos and families in that community.

- Colleen Hafner, Rise Community Development



I think that the housing resource fairs that took place in the community is something that definitely needs to be celebrated more. The housing resource fairs were a compilation of various banks, housing counseling agencies, realtors, and inspectors, who all came together under one roof to provide resources for the community. It was a big event—we brought out radio stations, had food. It was completely free and participants came in to find out information on the steps to becoming a home owner. We had non-for-profit organizations. Prosperity Connection pulled credit on the spot, letting customers know what their credit scores were and where they were to get started in the home buying process. Having all of those resources under one umbrella was an excellent opportunity for customers to experience a one-stop shop and everything that they needed to know about, what to do to become a home owner. I thought that was a time in the community where it showed a lot of togetherness and unity. There was no competition. If one bank couldn't do it, they walked you over to the next bank to say, hey, we're not able to do it, but this bank may be able to assist you with your needs. Everybody was just working together for one common cause and it was basically to help promote home ownership, build wealth, and close the wealth gap in low-income areas. There have been a lot of success stories from the fairs. I can tell you one specific one I know of, a young lady who came to one of those fairs. She found out her credit and found out she qualified. She didn't apply immediately, but it put her in the mindset of, yes, I can own my own home. She had been in the nursing field for 15-20 years, but she never saw herself as a homeowner. And she just bought a house about four, five months ago. The fair was a few years ago, but she stuck with it, did all the steps necessary to do the thing she needed to do. The fact that we all came together to help, to me, that was powerful, and is something that needs to be celebrated, and it's something that we need to continue to do on a regular basis.

-Monica Campbell, Enterprise Bank and Trust





I think this is just the small things, small wins, not something specific. A lot of times, we focus on the larger things that happen and we celebrate those, but we oftentimes forget about the small things that our organizations are doing, and how all those things fit together to create change and progress.

-Constance Siu, North Newstead Association

I think it's hope, because all of the neighborhoods have hard workers, but I noticed in our community, we have people who have worked in all spectrums, who have served, including myself. We don't get paid to do these things, this is all free. This is all passion, and our people are full of passion, and we keep getting more people, and I'm noticing, you know, we're starting to repopulate in our community, and I think that's great. We have development and redevelopment going on. But it's not like any of those units are ready, so I can't say that people are moving into the rehabbed housing and all of that. No, these are people who are private investors or who grew up in the community and are returning to the community, whether they're returning as the owner occupant or whether they're returning as an investor, for others to populate. So, you know, I think that it's really cool to see that there is an energy that is happening in our neighborhood in the Lewis Place and Fountain Park area. And I'm really glad about that.

-Pamela McLucas, Park Place Housing and Economic Development

Chauncey Nelson is presiding over Park Place Housing and Community Development and I assist. We are working with Legal Services of Eastern Missouri. We've entered into a partnership with them so that we can aid and assist in reducing vacancy in the community. So I'm excited about that, I think—you know that's worth celebrating, and should be talked about even more.

-Pamela McLucas, Park Place Housing and Economic Development



Especially during COVID, we've been conducting some outdoor events. One of the things that we just this month, on the 11th of September—we had a 5K called a Trap Run that allows relatives, people that live in the area to come. People come near and far to participate in this 5K event. All along the trail is music, and watering stations, and shared spaces, and trap music, and Christian rap music, with several DJs along the route. The route also gives people a good close-up look at the development that we're doing in the area. One of the things we're doing right now is building 21 homes. In 2018, when people came along the route, there was a vacant lot on St. Louis Avenue, but when they came through in 2019, we had 46 apartments. So this year, they saw four new homes coming up in the 2600 block of North Sarah. So every year they come through they'll see more development. Next year when they come through, there'll be another nine houses being built on the 1700 block of North Sarah. So we're doing that to also encourage people that may have interest in moving into the area to see all the development that we're doing. On top of that, we do events in cooperation with Shakespeare in the Park. And this year they did Shakespeare in the Park: The Ville. They actually conducted those on the 9th, 10th, and 11th of September. They had an outdoor event in front of Annie Malone Children's Home headquarters, and there was a play that was about the Ville. It talked about the history of Annie Malone and how people feel about the changes as to what had occurred back in the early 1900s versus how things have gone now, and how we can prepare and help develop the community and the future, both socially and economically.

-Michael Burns, Northside Community Housing

One other thing I'd like to definitely mention in Hamilton Heights is that the Hamilton Heights Neighborhood Organization is working to re-strategize and re-energize the community over there. Also knowing that investors are looking. I'm just thinking about Palm Street, how that was so vacant, even though Hamilton Heights had the new homes initiative and they built those new homes, but there were vacant houses there, vacant multi-families. And now those are occupied, and that street looks so good. As a matter of fact, as a real estate professional, I'm closing this week on selling one of his multi-families as a referral from one of the single-family owners that I sold to a few years back. So Hamilton Heights has things going on as well. And that is to be celebrated.

-Pamela McLucas, Park Place Housing and Community Development

I think this happens in a lot of neighborhoods, but one of the things I love about living in Shaw was the different community events that people put on, whether that be the Shaw Art Fair or ways that there will be a neighborhood parade for July 4th or the lighting of candles on Flora around holidays. So there's just little neighborhood traditions that get people out and experiencing the community and that the community



comes together for. I feel like that happens in multiple neighborhoods and it's neat to see it—neighbor-scale community activity, as well as all the work that CBN's done on policies and the capacity building system at the system scale.

-Karl Guenther, University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL)

Saturday mornings with my neighbors shopping, listening to music and buying veggies at the North City Farmers Market in Old North.

-Jessica Payne, Old North St. Louis Restoration Group

What's something that was totally different about the community development field 10 years ago?

More support for CDCs.

-Rick Bonasch, Rise Community Development

There was more public support for capacity building of Community Development Corporations. Today that infrastructure does not currently exist.

-Brian Hurd, Rise Community Development

The number of minorities in the field. There is a need for more diversity throughout various players in the field: Leadership, Finance, Developers, etc....

-David Noble, Midland States Bank

I believe more institutions now understand why their support is vital for communities to thrive. I think they understand they are neighbors, not just brick and mortar.

-Angela Pinex, Spanish Lake CDC

I would say it felt a lot more siloed. At the time, I was working in the City. I didn't really know what other community development organizations were working on. It was definitely very Ward-based at the time in the City, just because of the way Block Grants were distributed. You were kind of figuring things out on your own, and now it really feels like there's a lot more peer support and we're all connected, and that we have resources to learn about best practices and really learn from each other and work on things together.

-Stephanie Co, Beyond Housing



Ten years ago, community development was very far off, especially in North St Louis. It was dead. It was nonexistent...well, I won't say it was nonexistent, because people have been working through the years to improve the community. However, there was a limitation on the skill and capacity building in the community. So information was very withheld. And there were certain circles that you had to be in. And knowing the status of St. Louis and where we are now, even with dealing with equity, it is still a very real conversation, and people are finding themselves being examined. As a Black woman, growing up, I could see where people of non-color would teach their children to be isolated from other communities, and to look at them, to look at us, specifically, in a different way. So that has changed over the last 10 years. And I think that it has changed because, one, many of those generations have died out, and mostly their grandchildren or great-grandchildren have been exposed to other communities, and then also with technology, they're able to find out information that is truthful and not skewed. So, that is huge, I think, and then also the other part of the change in the last 10 years, are the transplants, people who move to St. Louis, maybe attended college at one of the universities, and found out that hey, this place could be really nice, and I'd like to be able to make a change. So there has been the impact of the transplant is what I'll call it, and that's been very positive. Over 10 years, it's been a big, big difference and hence CBN coming into play to help facilitate the growth of the disinvested communities of color, whether Black or Brown, but mostly the focus has been on the Black community, and to train us so that we know how to host meetings, so that we know how to network and interact and research and even make presentations—because presenting can be very intimidating, just the very thought of public speaking for some people, much less putting something on a screen, that would keep someone interested. So, those skills that have been taught and knowing about programs is very important, and has made a big change, I think, in our community and giving people the chance to say, hey, I didn't go to law school, I didn't go to that university. But what I think is important. And I love my neighborhood, my community, and my neighbors. So that's been a huge change.

-Pamela McLucas, Park Place Housing and Economic Development



One of the things that has been really helpful for me is the Neighboring 101 class. The Missouri Extension has been tremendous. And I go to the classes, and to be able to look and see what other communities are doing across the states is awesome, because there are so many times you have a thought, and because you don't see it in existence, around you, nearby—you think you're far off, easily, or you think that it can't be done. And then there's someone in Michigan or Iowa who had the same thought, and has gone on and executed and implemented just what you were thinking. I think that's tremendous. And I think that that's something that's underrated. I'd like to see more people participate in the Missouri Extension university classes and get connected online.

-Pamela McLucas, Park Place Housing and Economic Development



What do you hope will be different about the community development field 10 years from now?

We need to be more creative and open-minded. I think we need to change our architectural standards. For instance, the middle neighborhoods. We need to look at how we develop neighborhoods to be more affordable, especially for those who are first-time homebuyers. They don't need a big place, they've never owned before. We need to think smarter, not bigger. So I think if we're helping people become first-time home buyers and they're renting, we need to be smarter about how we build and what people can afford. I don't want us to be in the same boat as during the last recession, when people purchased homes that they can't really afford. I saw that all the time when I worked for a title company before the crash. I feel that could happen again. But I also feel that a lot of our CDCs could be doing training for homebuyers, what you should be buying, what size, what you can afford. Sometimes people buy and don't realize what they're getting into—you need a new roof, new plumbing, you never know what's going to happen. They just need to know how much they need to buy. A lot of people don't understand what being a homeowner really requires. It's expensive. I'd like to see not just helping people get an apartment, but also helping those who want to be a homebuyer.

-Rachel Witt, South Grand Community Improvement District

More support for CDCs.

-Rick Bonasch, Rise Community Development

Hopefully the field can attract young, dynamic and innovative talent who can attract a younger generation of residents and support. For the future, I hope planning and community development will better intersect.

-Brian Hurd, Rise Community Development

I would love the community development field to be more resourced as we continue to come together to continue this peer exchange, but also for us to be able to grow our capacity, and also grow capacity of non-CDC groups, community groups and neighborhood groups. I think CDCs are really tasked with quite a lot right now. I'd like to see not only building capacity for our organizations, but building capacity for anybody in community development.

-Stephanie Co, Beyond Housing

Well, I would hope that it will be easier for us to be able to come up with the funding that we need to be able to sustain ourselves. Northside has been successful these 44 years, but even Northside needs ways to diversify and to be able to make pots of money in ways above and beyond housing and grant writing. We do need some creative help on how we can diversify in a way that will take us into the next decade, in a way that we can have additional streams of income in order to help sustain us.

-Michael Burns, Northside Community Housing

Five, ten years from now, what I would hope to see is that every neighborhood is represented by a community development organization, that there's actually double or triple the number of community development professionals that are on the ground working in neighborhoods and working with neighborhoods to go ahead and better St. Louis.

-Brooks Goedeker, St. Louis Midtown Redevelopment Corporation

I hope that 10 years from now that St. Louis is heralded as being one of the greatest community development towns in the nation. And that it's one that is financially supported and has all the supports across policy environment, across investment environments, across community engagement—that it's thriving and bursting at the seams.

-Karl Guenther, University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL)

St. Louis growing with mental health and medical healthcare for families, especially needy youth.

-Robin, Old North



What do you hope will stay the same?

Passion and commitment of CDC boards and staffs.

-Rick Bonasch, Rise Community Development

I hope nothing stays the same. I hope there is a focus on true “Community Building by Investing in People and Places.” Community development is a multi-dimensional field. There should always be a triple net bottom line focus: financial, social, and environmental.

-David Noble, Midland States Bank



More institutional funding and better/cheaper ways to provide affordable housing. I hope the philanthropic hearts of individual St. Louisans will remain the same.

-Angela Pinex, Spanish Lake CDC

Volunteerism. We've been very successful with some very dedicated volunteers both as board members of the organization, and those volunteers that help us on our special projects such as the Trap Run, and the trivia event that we have. Without them, we wouldn't be as successful because we only have two full-time employees. We really need the assistance of the Board of Directors, volunteers for the events, as well as consultants that we utilize in order to get our work done. The people and their willingness to help, especially when it comes to volunteerism, is what I would love to see remain the same.

-Michael Burns, Northside Community Housing



General CBN Memories

I'm really grateful for the CBN staff. The level of professionalism that comes through is just amazing. And I'm really grateful for it. And we are grateful as a community for it. Because CBN has really helped us to get to a level where we need to be at so we can grow in. Sometimes with information, you don't even know what you need to know. But CBN—I think about the classes that I've attended through CBN, and, you know, it's just a maze itself. I've become a member of the Missouri Volunteer Association. So learning how to attract and manage volunteers—I learned about that through CBN.

-Pamela McLucas, Park Place Housing and Economic Development

This picture is of Amanda Colón-Smith (on the left side, purple jacket), former ED of Dutchtown South Community Corporation; Ernesia Coles (on the right side, plaid-ish jacket, red top), Brown School grad and former ED of Northside Community Housing Inc, and me when the three of us all attended a conference up in Milwaukee a few years ago. It was great connecting with Amanda and Ernesia there. By this time, Ernesia had relocated to Virginia, so this was a rare chance to visit with a longtime friend.

-Rick Bonasch, Rise Community Development



I have been involved with Community Builders Network’s awards events since 2014. Wow! Have we seen growth since that time! Rise used to present an enlarged check to all of our awardees for our CDC Capacity Building and Collaborative Grants Program at the CBN awards ceremony. This was one of my first opportunities to collaborate with CBN and here we are in 2021...I haven’t looked back and am so grateful for CBN and the vital work done in the community. I met Jenny Connelly-Bowen when she was enrolled in our Rising Stars Program; a mentorship, education, and hands-on training program for exceptional university students or recent graduates interested in careers in community economic development in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Jenny went on to co-chair the Rise Young Professionals Board (among many other activities to assist our communities) and is now providing exceptional, enthusiastic, and compassionate leadership to CBN. Congratulations to Jenny and CBN!

The first photo [on page 5] is from the CBN Awards Ceremony in 2016, held at Cortex when Hank Webber from Washington University was the keynote speaker. I will forever remember this quote which I have used many times: “Our History is Not Our Destiny”, truly words to live by. The second photo is of all of the Rising Stars Program graduates in 2016 including Jenny!

-Larry Perlmutter, Rise Community Development



Community development, as a field and in practice, is rooted in the personal relationships we hold with residents, non-profit staff, bankers, funders, elected officials, and more. People are the tie that binds us in this work, and as a result we find ourselves continually cross-collaborating, commiserating, and creating a realized version of the many goals set by our sector to improve the vitality and resiliency of community.

We come from different backgrounds and disciplines. The tables we share are populated by well-known veterans of the trade and wide-eyed novices, eager to contribute to positive change. Uncommon bonds are forged between for-profit and non-profit, bank and credit union, public and private, and so on. Lofty visions of what could and should be are often right-sized to what can be. Community development thrives through contradictions because unusual bedfellows inspire one another to create the most dynamic solutions to complex problems.

At the center of much of this work in the St. Louis region resides the Community Builders Network. CBN creates a third space for community development practitioners to ply their craft. Through thoughtfully curated conversations, we find like minds who put pen to paper and plans to action in order to foster meaningful solutions that create safer neighborhoods, spur elected officials to lever the power of government, and build the capacity of both residents and community organizations to thrive.

We, the community developers, believe in and are committed to bringing about a more equitable and inclusive society. After a decade of dialogue, collaboration, and collective action facilitated through CBN, we should be proud of what has been accomplished, as well as eager to keep moving ahead. Past challenges conquered will most certainly be always followed by new problems yet solved. We persist, together.

Here's to the past ten years, as well as the next ten that follow.
-Paul Woodruff, St. Louis Community Credit Union



As I think back about community development over the past 10 years, I am often reminded that it takes a community to do the heavy lifting.

-Kimberly McKinney, Habitat for Humanity Saint Louis



Co-chairing the coalition of neighborhood business districts.

-Rachel Witt, South Grand Community Improvement District (CID)

I remember when Todd first brought up the idea of CBN. I wasn't initially sold since the idea of supporting another organization in a time when support funds for community development organizations as a whole were scarce, I didn't like to idea of funneling those limited funds to a new group and possibly shorting someone else. I gradually eased in to the idea and the value or the network is obvious today. Still limited funding, but well worth it.



-Laura Gilbert, formerly with Commerce Bank

I remember that CBN's first Award Ceremony was held in 2013 at the El Monastero Center on Lindell on the Saint Louis University campus. Anyone else remember this? About 90 people attended and my sixteen-year-old daughter was the official photographer.

One of our first awards was given to Ernecia Coles, who served as ED of Northside Community Housing for about 10 years. Somebody told me at the reception that Ernecia had been hit by a stray bullet and had taken a few months off but then came back to work. That's dedication! By the way, I heard from Ernecia a few years ago and she's still working in the community development field as Executive Director of the Danville Neighborhood Development Corporation in Danville, Virginia. Ernecia's successor at Northside was Jessica Eiland. Jessica served for years on the CBN Board. Jessica is now doing community development work in Detroit at the Skillman Foundation. The wheel of community development keeps turning—even as people move from one city to another.
-Todd Swanstrom, University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL)



I just remember how much fun we've had together. Before CBN, I remember that all of us in community development would only get together once or twice a year. This was a great way to just get to know each other and hang out.
-Chris Krehmeyer, Beyond Housing

I began working for CBN in 2014 as a part-time community development specialist. I remember being surprised at how much time and energy it took for a community development corporation to build just one affordable home. But as I spent more time in the field, I understood why community development requires so much effort and dedication from so many different actors.

I learned the frustrations and challenges of trying to improve neighborhoods in St. Louis. It would have been easy to get discouraged by the slow pace of change, but what kept my spirits up was the incredible people that I worked with and the community members that I worked for. I learned to celebrate the smaller victories in community development, such as a neighborhood cleanup day or a new park bench, while continually striving for the larger goal of undoing the legacy of systemic racism that has created such a need for the community development field.

Throughout my many years in community development, I have been so grateful to the CDCs, banking institutions, nonprofits and individual community members who have been so generous with their time and so willing to lift each other up when the work becomes overwhelming. I am especially grateful to the Community Builders Network for providing the intellectual and emotional space for the important collaborations needed to sustain this work.

-Jenny Ryan, formerly with PGAV Planners

I appreciate CBN. This organization is not just a convener of people, but of thoughts, ideas, best practices, and a collective heart to serve St. Louis.

-Angela Pinex, Spanish Lake CDC

The most important aspects of the creation and operation of CBN are the people working to make our City great again with shared goals and vision. With all the struggles, our community leaders don't give up and they strive for excellence. CBN is a place where we can all come together to work together for the greater good.

-Sean Spencer, Tower Grove Neighborhoods CDC



Thank you so much for supporting and believing in us over these past 10 years. Here's to the next decade!

