



**PUBLIC  
POLICY  
RESEARCH  
CENTER**

University of  
Missouri - St. Louis

Annual Report  
2007-2008

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# Public Policy Research Center Annual Report, 2007-2008

This report summarizes development and growth in the Public Policy Research Center (PPRC) for Fiscal Year 2007-2008.

## I. Mission, Vision and Structure

### Our Mission

The Public Policy Research Center produces and disseminates methodologically rigorous and unbiased applied analysis and evaluation of public policies and programs and theoretical research on public policy issues.

### Our Vision

The Public Policy Research Center will advance the public research university mission of the University of Missouri-St. Louis by becoming the preeminent applied policy research resource for the civic and public communities of metropolitan St. Louis and the State of Missouri.

### Our Organization

Structurally, PPRC is organized around three units: Applied Research, Metropolitan Information and Data Analysis Services (MIDAS), and the Public Finance Initiative (PFI). Each unit is headed by a director. Other PPRC initiatives include the Point-of-View Photography Project, and Community History Research and Design Services (CHRDS). Research and Communications form the basis of PPRC's core competencies and approach.

## II. Public Policy Research Center Accomplishments, 2007-2008

### Applied Research Division

The core work of the Public Policy Research Center is applied policy research. PPRC responds to community-identified needs with a multi-disciplinary approach to quantitative and qualitative research. PPRC has established its research expertise in a range of areas, including workforce development, urban revitalization, fair housing, and regionalism. PPRC possesses core research skills that allow it to study a wide spectrum of social and public policy questions. PPRC's research is undertaken in close partnerships with local, county, regional and state governments and agencies,



nongovernmental organizations, and citizen's groups. During FY 2007-2008, Applied Research accomplished the following projects and partnerships:

College of Education

Gear Up — evaluation services for COE grant project

STEP — evaluation services for COE grant project

Father's Support Center

Outcomes evaluation of a Male Health and Wellness initiative developed by the Fathers' Support Center with funding from the Missouri Foundation for Health

Gateway Greening

Conducted study of community garden impact on neighborhood crime; project evaluation for City Seeds

Hope VI

Outcomes, as well as process evaluation, of the Cochran Gardens HOPE VI project. The study focuses on both the build out and the case management activities of Better Family Life's Project C.R.E.A.T.E., the agency awarded the subcontract for this work.

St. Louis 4 Kids

Preparation of GIS maps and inventory of after school programs in St. Louis Public Schools

St. Louis-Jefferson Solid Waste Management District

Research and facilitation regarding coordinated solid waste contracting and recycling services in states surrounding the SWMD.

St. Patrick Center

Evaluation of Project Protect, the provision of services to households at risk of children being placed in foster care due to dependency problems of adults (Project ongoing through 2011)

Washington University Department of Computer Science

Evaluation of CPATH, the introduction of active learning into curriculum (ongoing through 2010)



### ARCHS

Evaluation of Five Star program of academic assistance and skill building by Wyman Center, Inc. in five St. Louis Public Schools (project ongoing through 2010)

### The Scholarship Foundation

Working with two Faculty Fellows, Patricia Boyer and Kathleen Sullivan Brown, develop a method for estimating scholarship need in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

### St. Louis Agency for Training and Employment (SLATE)

Evaluation of Transitions to Work for Youth, program of education and employment training services (through 2009).

### Rockwood School District

Evaluation of Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant program (through 2009)

### Operation Weed & Seed

Evaluation of Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant program

## Metropolitan Information and Data Analysis Services (MIDAS) Division

The MIDAS unit of PPRC provides multi-method research design, survey research and analysis, demographic data collection and analysis, database design and implementation, and GIS services. MIDAS is primarily funded by contracts with local organizations. MIDAS' primary objectives include providing information and data analysis services for regional public policy analysis; servicing the needs of faculty and students working with quantitative data sources; working with and for local governmental organizations, non-governmental agencies, and the private sector on issues relating to the acquisition, management and analysis of quantitative data; and providing support to PPRC's applied research and community/neighborhood development projects. During FY 2007-2008, MIDAS accomplished the following projects and partnerships:

### **Workforce Information System (WIS)**

Ongoing project currently in its eighth and final year. The WIS provides the St Louis Metropolitan Region with timely workforce information. This comprehensive database includes current estimates and projections on occupation demand and a current picture of the changing skills and job requirements of those occupations. Included in its



comprehensive database are data on regional and county economies, demographics, labor force composition, and profiles of the education, training and employment communities.

### **Job Vacancy Surveys**

Twice a year (in May and October), MIDAS surveys close to 2,500 local businesses throughout the two-state, twelve-county metropolitan region and provides current estimates and projections on occupation and skills demand. During fiscal year 2007-2008, MIDAS completed Job Vacancy Surveys for the St. Louis MSA for May and October of 2007. MIDAS recently finished compiling data and is now composing the report for May 2008.

### **Labor Demand Surveys**

An extension of the Job Vacancy Surveys, these analyze specific employment sectors. During this FY, MIDAS conducted surveys for the IT-Producing sector and the Advanced Manufacturing sector. The analysis is near completion and reports will be published in the next month.

### **The Missouri Job Vacancy Survey**

This statewide survey and research project is funded by the Missouri Department of Economic Development's Division of Workforce Development (DWD) and Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC). PPRC's MIDAS division provides timely information about the quantity and quality of job vacancies across Missouri. The survey results supply a measure of employer demand for workers at a regional level along with an analysis of wage and benefits offered, education and experience requirements, and skill gaps of recent applicants. MIDAS has a two year contract to provide one report each year through 2008.

## **Public Finance Initiative**

The Public Finance Initiative (PFI) became a PPRC operational unit in 2005. The PFI conducts research on the policies – and the administration that implements them -- regarding governmental revenues and expenditures at the state and local level. The PFI aims to produce and communicate objective, high quality research that informs policy makers, administrators and other interested parties as well as raises new questions worthy of future study. Some projects compare practices or results in other states in order to bring the benefit of comparative knowledge to Missouri's policy makers and administrators. Currently, the PFI has two focus areas for research: property tax policy and administration, and education finance. In both areas, most of the effect is local, but most of the policies are prescribed (and/or proscribed) by state policy makers. Furthermore, both of these policy



areas are continually evolving, so new information is constantly in demand. During FY 2007-2008, PFI has accomplished the following projects:

### **PFI Publications**

The Public Finance Initiative has published a variety of research reports and policy briefs examining multiple aspects of tax assessments and revenues in Missouri. These include:

**Policy Brief 17, Acquiring Essential Sales Information is a State Responsibility,**  
October 2007

**2005 Commercial Ratio Study of St. Louis County,** June 2007

**2003 Commercial Ratio Study of St. Louis County,** June 2007

### **Living With Our Property Tax: Facts, Issues, Options - A Living Guide to Missouri's Property Tax**

This is the title given to a major research effort conducted by the PFI, and published in one short report and a subsequent website during the last fiscal year. The **Short Version** of the paper, a collection of facts about Missouri taxes, was published in October 2007.

The research arose from the 2007 reassessment of property and resulting tax increases in some portions of the state. During the Fall of 2007, the research was presented to a number of different legislative committees and commissions.

### **Living With Our Property Tax Website**

An extension and expansion of the research, PFI has launched a website called Living with Our Property Tax: Facts, Issues, Options ([http://pprc.umsl.edu/base\\_pages/pubfinance/LivingWTax-Main.htm](http://pprc.umsl.edu/base_pages/pubfinance/LivingWTax-Main.htm)). . An ongoing project, it was first implemented in October 2007. With regular updates and additions, this site offers a virtual guide to Missouri's \$6 billion property tax system. The site contains multiple fact sheets and mini reports concerning aspects of Missouri's personal, property and income tax, as well as assessment methodologies, collection, usage, and restrictions facing these revenues. The site also offers historical documents that examine taxes over different periods in recent Missouri history.

One section of this website contains links to tax policy data and charts. These fact sheets provide comparisons of Missouri's taxes, including tax and revenue data in categories ranging from Alcohol Tax, Personal Property, Motor Vehicle Licensing and Sales Tax. The



tables also show revenue from various Missouri taxes and rank Missouri against other states. This data is unique in that it examines state, local and total (state plus local) revenues, which presents a more complete picture.

### **PFI Activities**

#### **Metropolitan Research Exchange Project**

This is an ongoing project. PFI is working to archive property data for the St. Louis metropolitan region.

#### **Missouri Association School Business Officials Conference**

In April, PFI Director Steve Gardner presented a session regarding property tax reform at the Missouri Association of School Business Officials' spring conference.

#### **Missouri Association for Social Welfare Conference**

In April, PFI Director Steve Gardner served as a panelist for the Missouri Association of Social Welfare's Forum on the Property Tax in Jefferson City, MO.

#### **Missouri General Assembly**

In November 2007, PFI Director Steve Gardner and Research Specialist David Mariott testified before Missouri General Assembly's Joint Committee on Tax Policy. Gardner and Mariott presented information about Missouri's property tax and provided additional analysis on some of the many suggested changes to the property tax system to be heard in the upcoming legislative session. During this legislative session, PFI staff also met multiple times with legislators and staff to confer about bills and proposals.

#### **Property Tax Seminars**

During April and May 2008, the PFI unit of PPRC provided a series of four tax seminars across the state. These free seminars aimed to illustrate the true effect of existing and proposed tax limitations. One seminar was held in St. Louis, Jefferson City, Kansas City and Springfield, MO. The seminars examined various tax limitations, including the Hancock Amendment, assessment change restrictions, and faulty assessment and enforcement. The seminars also looked ahead at legislation that is currently being considered, and proposed several practical options for improvement in the short-term.

#### **State Tax Commission Agriculture Value Hearings**

PFI Director Steve Gardner conferred with legislators and staff when the State Tax Commission of Missouri (STC) met in November to receive recommendations for new



agricultural use values for the 2009 reassessment. During the previous fiscal year, PFI produced a report that examined agricultural values and Missouri's property tax system.

## Point-of-View Photography Project

The Photography Project: Point-of-View Series mirrors PPRC's mission by spotlighting photographs that explore life in St. Louis neighborhoods from the perspective of the people who live and work in them. The project relies on community photography, a highly specialized and somewhat uncommon area of the photographic arts in which the people who are usually the subjects of photo documentation become the photographers. By placing cameras in the hands of residents, the exhibits allow residents the opportunity to decide how their lives are portrayed. The gallery also engages the communities by placing the exhibits in the neighborhoods it portrays. All exhibits are on view in at least two locations, one in the community and one on UMSL's campus, and each exhibit opens with gallery talks featuring the Photography Project staff and participants. During FY 2007-2008, the PPRC Photography Project featured the following exhibits and projects:

### Exhibitions

#### **Point-of-View: Lewis Place Historic Preservation, Inc.**

May 15 – July 27, 2007, on view at the PPRC Gallery at UMSL.

May 22 – July 27, 2007, on view at Stevens Community School, St. Louis.

*This project was undertaken with assistance from PPRC's CHRDS division.*

#### **St. Louis Through the Lens: Irvin Schankman Memorial Photography Contest**

##### **Finalist Exhibit**

June 28, 2007 – October 6, 2007, on display at Gallery 210 on UMSL's campus

##### **PPRC Staff Photography Exhibit**

August 7 - September 28, 2007, on display at the PPRC Gallery at UMSL

##### **Point-of-View: Art and Aging**

Sept. 25, 2007 - January 5, 2008, on display at the Dennis and Judith Jones Visitor and Education Center

##### **Point of View: Prison Performing Arts**

October 16, 2007-January 13, 2008, on display at the PPRC Gallery at UMSL

October 23, 2007 - December 8, 2007, on display at the Schlafly Branch, St. Louis Public Library



**Point of View: Weed & Seed**

February 19 – May 18, 2008, on display at the PPRC Gallery at UMSL.

February 26 – May 17, 2008, on display at the West End Mt. Carmel Outreach Center

**Point-of-View: Simmons-Marshall Mega Magnet School**

April 11 – May 27, on display at Simmons-Marshall Elementary School.

**Point-of-View: Herbert Hoover Boys and Girls Club and Oasis**

April 15 thru June 30, 2008, on display at the PPRC Gallery at UMSL.

April 2 - June 30, 2008, on display at the Herbert Hoover Boys and Girls Club

## PPRC Publications and Presentations

**Books**

***St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis (December 2007)***

The third volume in the St. Louis Metromorphosis series, edited by PPRC Director Mark Tranel. This volume reviews the history of various aspects of planning and provides insight into planning successes and challenges. The volume also looks ahead with lessons for future regional plans.

**Reports and Presentations**

**“Sustaining Homeownership Among Low- Moderate-Income Homebuyers: An Explanatory Analysis of the Role of Counseling,”** by Mark Tranel and William Winter (July 2007)

**An Applied Research Seminar: “Immigration and the Local Economy”** (January 2008).

Panelists included Nikki Weinstein, Director of Policy and Community Engagement with FOCUS St. Louis; Richard T. Middleton, IV, Ph.D., J.D. candidate; Assistant Professor of political science at UMSL; and Jorge Riopedre, an officer of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metro St. Louis.

**St. Louis Plans: The Ideal and the Real St. Louis**, a book signing and discussion, presented by Mark Tranel, Ph.D., Mark Abbott, Ph.D., Richard Patton, Ph.D.



**“The Use of Planned Change Technology by Complex Religious Organizations”**, by Mark Tranel and Nancy Kinney. Presented at the 39th Annual Conference of the Urban Affairs Association in Baltimore, MD (April 2008)

**“St. Louis Stasis – Did We Plan It or Just Get There by Default?”** presented by Mark Tranel and Mark Abbott (April 2008)

**“Community Impact of Low-Income and Minority Homeownership Programs”** (May 2008). This paper is based on research that was conducted by UMSL’s Public Policy Administration, with support from the Public Policy Research Center.

### III. Teaching and Student Learning

PPRC is a research unit rather than an academic unit and for that reason PPRC does not engage in direct, classroom teaching. However, PPRC works with students in a number of non-classroom capacities, and the PPRC Photography Project is engaged in community education.

#### Student Learning

PPRC recognizes its responsibility to the students attending the university and works to enhance and strengthen their educational experience. Partnerships with students benefit the university and community as well as changing the way that students learn. PPRC serves as a policy laboratory for a number of graduate students participating in research and outreach activities, connects students with metropolitan issues through field-based learning, and provides a number of office positions for undergraduates.

**Work Opportunities for Students:**

**Graduate Research Assistantships:** PPRC relies on the assets of UMSL’s student pool, and engages students in a variety of graduate research assistantship positions in applied and quantitative research. During FY 2007-2008, PPRC was able to provide GRA positions to seven students.

**Student Assistant Opportunities:** The PPRC employs student assistants in a variety of office and clerical positions. Working on campus, students become familiar with professional academic climate. They are also able to network with other professionals in a variety of academic fields. During FY 2007-2008, PPRC was able to provide student assistant positions to two students.



### **Experiential Learning Opportunities**

**Doctoral Candidates:** PPRC's staff consists of several students who are Ph.D. candidates. Field experience at PPRC provides these students with hands-on experience in their field of interest; likewise, because of their highly specialized focus and their commitment to learning, these students bring a wealth of valuable knowledge and talent to the Center.

**Historical Research:** Through the PPRC's Community History Research and Design Services (CHRDS) program, students receive training through hands-on history projects. The core of this program revolves around collaboration between students and faculty in history, museology, and urban archeology. Students work in neighborhoods to catalog, index, and organize community historical documents and artifacts and make them accessible to the public.

**Public Policy Administration Research Evaluation:** In Spring, 2007, the Public Policy Administration department received a PPRC fellowship for an interdisciplinary project that examines low-income and minority homeownership in St. Louis City and County. The project, which was recently extended and will continue through Academic Year 2008, relies upon faculty expertise across a number of disciplines, including public policy, political science, economics, nonprofit management and GIS.

## **Community Education**

The PPRC Gallery and Photography Project seeks to broaden the general public's knowledge about the photographic arts, to provide photographic training and exhibition opportunities to individuals in St. Louis community groups and to strengthen the community by drawing attention to the impact community groups have on the quality of life in St. Louis. To accomplish this, each year the Photography Project teaches volunteers from three community groups to take high quality photographs of their efforts to make St. Louis a better community. PPRC provides all necessary supplies and equipment for the project. A selection of their photographs is shown in Point-of-View exhibitions simultaneously at two locations: the PPRC Gallery on the UMSL campus and in the neighborhoods where the volunteers work. This broadens the educational outreach of the Gallery by bringing photographic exhibitions to people who may not be comfortable visiting museums or galleries, but will attend an exhibition in their own neighborhood, and by introducing audience members to areas of the city they might otherwise never experience or understand.



## IV. Continuous Improvement

### Progress since the Five-Year Review

During FY 2006-2007, PPRC undertook the five-year self study and completed the Five Year Review in order to evaluate ways to improve its programs, as well as to reassess its contribution to the University's mission and goals.

At this point, the Public Policy Research Center continues to await feedback from the Campus Review Team regarding our Five Year Review process and report. Because we have not received official recommendations, we are unable to report on our progress since then. We will provide an update to this part of our annual report when we have received and reviewed the feedback from the Campus Review Team.

### Critical Issues Facing PPRC

Since the Five Year Review, two significant issues have arisen for the Public Policy Research Center.

In May 2008, PPRC's MIDAS unit learned that its contract with SLATE, which funds the Workforce Information System and the bi-annual Job Vacancy Surveys, will not be renewed. Due to increasing economic challenges and reallocated resources, SLATE has had less funding available each year to devote to the WIS project. In May they learned that the allocations have evaporated completely. MIDAS is currently working to finish their final report for SLATE and the Workforce Information System.

The MIDAS unit contributes significant and highly specialized skill sets to the PPRC. These include multi-method research design, survey research and analysis, demographic data collection and analysis, database design, and GIS services. Although the majority of MIDAS's time has been commissioned by the SLATE project, MIDAS does engage in a number of smaller projects with other organizations. During the time it takes for MIDAS to generate new contracts and partners who can utilize their research competencies, the PPRC will reallocate its own funds wherever possible. MIDAS has begun the process of exploring new avenues for research contracts.

The other significant change for the PPRC is that in January, Todd Swanstrom was named as the Des Lee Endowed Professor of Community Collaboration and Public Policy Administration. Since 2001, Dr. Swanstrom has been Professor of Public Policy Studies at Saint. Louis University. From 1982 – 2001, he was Professor of Political Science at Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, State University of New York at Albany.



Dr. Swanstrom will begin his new position on August 31, 2008. At that time, PPRC will undertake a planning process to determine how the new position will change the PPRC.

## Linking to University of Missouri-St. Louis's Strategic Plan

The Public Policy Research Center supports the mission of the University of Missouri-St. Louis as a metropolitan public research university that advances the economy and culture of the region through applied and theoretical research on public policy issues; analysis and evaluation of public policies and programs; collection, analysis, and dissemination of information on the St. Louis region and the state of Missouri; and research on comparative metropolitan and policy issues in the national and international context. PPRC supports the University's aim to advance its research knowledge through outreach and public service by disseminating applied and theoretical research results through scholarly publications, conference proceedings, books and monographs, and other scholarly and applied outlets. PPRC works to enhance the University's academic programs by engaging students in partnerships, internships and graduate research assistantships. PPRC also serves as a policy laboratory for graduate students participating in research and outreach activities, connects students with metropolitan issues through field-based learning, and provides a number of office positions for undergraduates.

In addition to the Five Year Review PPRC also recently engaged in its own strategic planning process. PPRC's Strategic Plan emphasized the ways that PPRC shall play a significant role in improving the quality of research and enhancing civic engagement. PPRC emerged from the strategic planning process with three primary goals:

1. Respond to the research needs of civic and public organizations, particularly intermediary organizations, in metropolitan St. Louis
2. Expand the geographic focus from metropolitan St. Louis to the state of Missouri
3. Seek opportunities for PPRC-directed policy research

Following this planning process, PPRC took steps to obtain these objectives. Towards our re-focused mission, PPRC has sought projects that are directly linked to the identified competencies and objectives. PPRC has also identified several key community partners, and has actively engaged them in seeking projects and contract work. PPRC has also taken steps to collaborate directly with faculty. One outcome of this is the multi-disciplinary project on homeownership in low-income neighborhoods, which is a partnership between PPRC and Public Policy Administration. Finally, PPRC has expanded its services to include the entire State of Missouri. Notable projects with a statewide reach include MIDAS's Missouri job vacancy research, as well as the Public Finance Initiative's Missouri tax research and seminars.



The next fiscal year will see significant changes for the PPRC, as we welcome a new Des Lee Endowed Professor, adjust to the funding changes for the MIDAS unit, and respond to the feedback provided to us regarding the Five Year Review.

