

Shine Brighter Première

FlashFile 8 St. Louis: urban renewal?

Vidéo p. 76 – Extrait de *Now This*, 2017.

Voiceover: This is the “Delmar Divide”. A street many in St. Louis consider a symbolic boundary of racial division that has existed for decades.

Max Wright: You see the Delmar Divide and you see the lack of funds in primarily black areas. It’s like what’s going on? How come we can’t have black communities that are vibrant and prosperous, and have money and actually have representation in the community?

Justin Idelburg: You can just look in the skyline: there are tons of cranes! You look on our side of Delmar, all you see is pain.

Voiceover: Officially sanctioned segregation in St. Louis can be traced back over a hundred years. In 1916, voters overwhelmingly enacted a measure making it illegal for a person of one particular race to move into a neighborhood occupied by more than 75% of another race. The law was overturned a year later, but St. Louis remained racially divided due to existing housing associations that were pro-segregation. With support from the city real-estate board, these housing associations forced white property owners to sign covenants forbidding the resale of their homes to non-whites for periods up to 50 years. This practice was one of many so-called ‘restrictive covenants’ enacted all over the U.S. during the same time period. Meanwhile, another widespread practice known as ‘red-lining’ also helped reinforce segregation. Red boundary lines were literally drawn on maps by mortgage lenders,

insurance companies and the like, labeling African-American neighborhoods as 'risky investments' or even 'dangerous.' Red-lining effectively corralled black families into specific neighborhoods, while whites could live everywhere else. Welfare associations would write letters to residents saying things like, "A colored resident in your immediate neighborhood destroys the value of your property immeasurably. While perhaps you have not been affected by this class of people coming into this neighborhood, you surely want protection against this growing danger, which is more menacing than fire or the elements." It would take a 1948 Supreme Court decision to overturn the enforcement of racist covenant clauses. But the damage had been done—decades of state-sanctioned segregation left St. Louis racially divided in ways that still hold true today.

How One Street Symbolizes America's Racial Divide, *Now This*, 2017.

Vidéo p. 77 – Extrait de *KMOV St Louis*, 2025.

Female anchor: Delmar Boulevard, a name synonymous with development and what some call the Delmar Divide. For years there has been work to bring in new business and attract new residents. In fact, just north of Delmar home prices are going up as more houses go on the market.

Male anchor: First Alert 4's Russell Kinsaul joins us on Delmar with the continued efforts to develop this area and erase a divide that has been a stain on our past.

Russell Kinsaul: So, this house behind me is the latest to be renovated, to be purchased, renovated, to be put on the market by a retired couple that grew up in North St. Louis. They are committed to make sure that their part of the West End neighborhood is elevated and a desirable place to live. But here in North St. Louis it's not the only thing that's going on.

Rodney Norman: When you work on an old structure like this you never know what you will encounter.

Russell Kinsaul: Rodney and Juanita Norman bought this 118-year-old house for \$5700 and turned it into this house listed today for \$795,000.

Juanita Norman: We take pride in where we live.

Russell Kinsaul: Rodney grew up on this block of Maple Street. After retiring, the couple moved back, then bought, renovated and sold three homes and built another home to live in.

Rodney Norman: I think the people who live on other streets, they appreciate it. In fact, often when my wife was working in the garden, they would say can you come on our street and do that work?

Russell Kinsaul: Despite the vacant and decaying houses down the street, they have invested the last seven years, lots of hard work and money into lifting the neighborhood.

Juanita Norman: There has been a big transformation in this street from when we moved here in 2007.

Russell Kinsaul: Their efforts have contributed to the rise in property values in North St. Louis. In the zip code where they live, median home sales prices have shot up nearly \$30,000 since the start of the year. Antoine Lawrence is the Normans' realtor.

Antoine Lawrence: The purpose of this home essentially is to help raise the neighborhood. To bring value and wealth to the neighbors.

Russell Kinsaul: To counter the blight caused by vacant homes, a major effort is underway in St. Louis to demolish many of the worst eyesores. So far this year 40 homes owned by the city's land-use revitalization authority have been demolished. The goal is 200 by the end of the year. Using \$15 million of ARPA funds, the city's goal is to demolish 1,000 vacant properties by the end of 2026. Renovations like this are sending a message.

Antoine Lawrence: Not just, you know, West County or South County, you can come to North County or North City and get the same type of product.

Russell Kinsaul: But this is probably the Normans' last renovation.

Rodney Norman: To accomplish what we've accomplished at our age is commitment.

Russell Kinsaul: Yes, both are retired and in their 70s but they've been working hard to elevate this neighborhood. So, the goal of the demolition is to create environments for investment and development, and create improved safety. The hard work and the investment by the Normans have helped toward those goals. Live in the West End neighborhood, Russell Kinsaul, First Alert 4.

Renovations lift north St. Louis neighborhood, *KMOV St Louis*, 2025.