

# The Lafayette Square Special Business District

## Q&A

### Answers To Frequently Asked Questions

#### Lafayette Square Looking Forward:

#### Why Neighborhood Investment and Sustainment Are So Critical To Our Future

Everyone who knows this neighborhood is struck by its potential as well as its heritage. Our restoration successes continue to inspire other neighborhoods nationwide, and we have come a long way toward fulfilling a once-distant promise: combining a deep respect for our distinguished past with a vision of a unique and highly-livable urban setting for today and tomorrow.

After years of dramatic improvements and restoration successes, however, the Lafayette Square area has recently been on a plateau, with many critical developments and improvements lagging. Because of the neighborhood's lack of access to the more substantial funds required by a number of our most important improvement objectives, many key capital projects have been so long deferred that they are now at risk. The big problem is not vision or energy or the lack of plan. The big problem is funding. The neighborhood's annual maintenance obligations alone just about equal the entire annual revenue of the Lafayette Square Restoration Committee, including all the money we raise through special events such as house tours. This leaves little or no margin for on-going infrastructure restoration or for wise investments in safety and security.

In April of 2015, following a series of public meetings, a Lafayette Square Special Business District (SBD) will be proposed to voters as a means of generating substantial new revenue sources for the neighborhood. The Special Business District, as described in this document, is a forward-looking neighborhood development tool that will enable the residents of the neighborhood for the first time to invest our property tax dollars in tangible neighborhood improvements rather than see them go outside the community. In doing so, the SBD will provide a stable, reliable, and on-going source of the significant funds needed for infrastructure improvements, maintenance, and safety and security enhancements for Lafayette Square. These funds would become available beginning early in 2016.

This *Frequently Asked Questions* document provides detailed background information on the Lafayette Square Special Business District under four major headings:

- I. Is funding Lafayette Square improvements a neighborhood responsibility?
- II. How would a Special Business District work in Lafayette Square?
- III. What would the SBD's revenue targets be for our neighborhood?
- IV. What are the bottom line benefits of the SBD for Lafayette Square?

To make comments, ask questions, or make additions to a priority list of needed public improvements in the neighborhood, please use the Lafayette Square website ([www.lafayettesquare.org/sbd](http://www.lafayettesquare.org/sbd)). Or contact Merry Dahms, Houston Smith, or Matt Negri. Their contact info is provided in the Lafayette Square Neighborhood Directory.

## **I. IS FUNDING LAFAYETTE SQUARE IMPROVEMENTS A NEIGHBORHOOD RESPONSIBILITY?**

### **Q: WHY DOES LAFAYETTE SQUARE NEED TO FUND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS? [I-1]**

**A:** In 2001, as part of a sustained community effort led by an urban planning team from Washington University, Lafayette Square residents and business owners developed and secured City of St. Louis approval of an official Urban Plan for the neighborhood. A key part of the plan was a To-Do List of critically needed neighborhood improvements, with cost estimates for each. The to-do list was designed to: (a) ensure the long term viability of the Square's often-fragile infrastructure, (b) recognize both its unique heritage and its contemporary urban culture, (c) support intelligently-planned future development, and (d) enhance the quality, safety, and security of life in the neighborhood. With funding a key consideration, potential revenue mechanisms enumerated in the plan included special fundraising events, applications for grants and awards, a major capital campaign, a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District, and special taxing district funding approaches. We have seen concerted activity in three of these areas: special fund raising events, grant applications, and TIF. These activities will continue, although the TIF has nearly reached the end of its fund raising tenure. The Special Business District is designed to continue, fulfill, and extend the critical improvements included by the neighborhood in the Urban Plan.

### **Q: ISN'T THE CITY RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS? [I-2]**

**A:** The city of St. Louis will continue to be responsible for basic city-wide public infrastructure components, including streets and sidewalks, refuse collection, and many other key areas. But like most other major cities nationwide, St. Louis is facing chronic revenue and budget shortfalls of its own, and has been annually reducing its financial support to city neighborhoods for years. Beyond very basic infrastructure support, the city will not be a source of substantial funding for the Lafayette Square Urban Plan improvements or for meeting our other neighborhood-centered improvement needs and obligations.

### **Q: WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE URBAN PLAN TO-DO LIST PROJECTS NOW? [I-3]**

**A:** The original Urban Plan to-do list included the following items:

1. Replacing the sprawling automobile junkyard at 18th Street and Park Avenue with a plaza and fountain, and upgrading streetscaping for the adjacent Business District.
2. Reconfiguring the 18th Street/Dolman/Chouteau neighborhood streets and parking for future development.
3. Upgrading key intersections and streets throughout the Square with traffic calming measures.
4. Installing historically compatible entrance gate features at key neighborhood entry points to visually and architecturally define the neighborhood.
5. Installing historically compatible lighting for streets, pedestrian ways, and key landscaping features which would have the added benefit of enhancing safety and security throughout the neighborhood.
6. Restoring, rebuilding, and sustaining featured elements of Lafayette Park, the Square's key anchor and one of the nation's best remaining examples of a Victorian Walking Park.
7. Providing for on-going maintenance and preservation of the Square's unique physical assets, old and new.
8. Investing in appropriate neighborhood safety and security measures for residents and visitors.

The first three items on the list have been basically accomplished, with dramatic transformative effects on the neighborhood. Several more of the handsome entry features referenced in Item 3 above will be installed at key access points in the coming months, helping to emphasize the neighborhood's visually distinctive and organic architectural character. The Park's resounding renovation success stories, like the new Kern Pavilion, the restored Park House, and the beautifully rescued Rock Garden and Grotto areas have all been impressive accomplishments. Items 5, 6, 7, and 8 on the list, however, have seen little or

no progress, held back by funding shortages and the challenge of raising the substantial funds needed. Many other projects have been long deferred or abandoned. In addition, critical new items have presented themselves for addition to the to-do list over the 14 years since the development of the Urban Plan for Lafayette Square.

**Q: HOW HAVE WE RAISED FUNDS FOR PAST IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS? [I-4]**

**A:** Original estimates for the very limited capital improvement projects on the Urban Plan list totaled \$10 million-plus. Over the past 14 years, the LSRC has raised \$30,000 to \$60,000 annually with special events, principally from the Spring House Tour and the Christmas Parlor Tours. These small but reliable fund raising efforts will continue. The Lafayette Park Conservancy has raised modest sums from its own events and from public and private grants for particular projects, and will continue to do so. The Tax Increment Financing District (TIF) has raised and invested \$3 million over the years to build the Park Avenue Plaza, reshape the 18th and Chouteau intersection and ellipse, and fund the Boathouse Renovation in the Park. It has also earmarked \$500,000 to help build entry features and intersection improvements elsewhere in the neighborhood. The TIF is now heading into the last few years of its limited life span and its returns to the neighborhood are dwindling, but it will invest its final income increments in a few other Urban Plan projects. (The TIF expires in 2024.)

**Q: WHY DO WE NEED TO RAISE MORE MONEY FOR LAFAYETTE SQUARE? [I-5]**

**A:** Many of the neighborhood's standout successes have stemmed from the valiant efforts of individual residents and businesses to restore and develop individual properties and features. Much of the neglect and deterioration we face today, however, is associated not with individual properties but with public infrastructure features. These features are not just esthetic or historic. They directly affect our quality of life, our ongoing development prospects, our property values, and the long-term vitality of the neighborhood. Lafayette Park, a priceless one-of-a-kind anchor that gives the neighborhood much of its unique character, is itself increasingly at risk. While the park has benefitted from tireless volunteer efforts, its infrastructure is fragile. Areas that suffer from chronic deferred maintenance and need serious attention soon include the ornate 1869 iron fence, the imposing limestone gate fixtures, the lake and fountain systems, and the walkways. Restoration of the park's lighting system, removed long ago, would bring back the unique ambience it once had at night and would offer major safety and security benefits as well. The park's potential as a national heritage attraction and a gem-like destination for residents and visitors has been documented, but can only be realized if its infrastructure problems are resolved. These problems will cost millions of dollars to fix and are far beyond the scope of the most dedicated volunteer efforts. Every year the historic district's maintenance costs alone require funding that is equal to about what the LSRC can raise in a good year. (For the last few years the LSRC has had more expenses than revenue every year.) Neighborhood safety and security add another layer of unresolved challenge that will be very expensive to deal with. In an era of increasingly constrained city budgets, no funds are available or likely to become available to address these kinds of challenges.

**Q: IS THE SBD ANOTHER MEANS OF FURTHERING NEIGHBORHOOD GENTRIFICATION? [I-6]**

**A:** No, it's more the opposite. As a neighborhood, Lafayette Square has learned from experience that revitalizing core urban areas does not have to mean an exodus of lower income residents. Studies and reports by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland, the Columbia University Urban Planning Program, and the Missouri Foundation for Health all document that intelligent urban renewal and revitalization can bring material, social, and health benefits to the original residents of a neighborhood rather than pushing them out. Known for the grand three-story Victorian homes clustered around its park, Lafayette Square is

actually made up of a diverse mix of large, mid-sized, and modest homes with a high percentage of market rate infill housing and redeveloped rental lofts. Even in the 1890s, when Lafayette Square was at the peak of its wealth and influence, it was a diverse neighborhood of large, small, and in-between homes and apartments with room for immigrants, workers, and young professionals alike. The neighborhood has worked for decades to respect and preserve this diversity, and sees the SBD as another phase of revitalization that will continue to promote and preserve a diverse base of residents. In addition to its historic cityscape Lafayette Square is respected nationwide as a model for urban self-renewal, and the SBD will place a priority on sharing the neighborhood's restoration and redevelopment successes and lessons-learned with other neighborhoods in the city and across the nation.

## **II. HOW WOULD A SPECIAL BUSINESS DISTRICT WORK IN LAFAYETTE SQUARE?**

### **Q: EXACTLY WHAT IS A SPECIAL BUSINESS DISTRICT? [II-1]**

**A:** A Special Business District is a hands-on unit of very local government, authorized by state statute and instituted and operated by neighborhood residents. An SBD has the authority to collect taxes based on the assessed value of property within that neighborhood, and then to use those funds expressly to improve and benefit the neighborhood. Unlike conventional property taxes, the revenues collected are reserved for and used only to benefit the neighborhood. In an SBD, both revenues and expenditures are controlled by the SBD rather than the city or state government. Revenues raised are designated by the SBD for specific public purposes, such as neighborhood improvements and security, which financially-pressed city governments are increasingly unable to address. (The term “business district” is misleading, since both residential and commercial properties are taxed, with the proceeds being used by and for the entire neighborhood.) Sections 71.790 to 71.808 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri govern special business districts in this state. Once authorized by the city, an SBD is a legal state entity, distinct and apart from the city. It may therefore contract directly with independent contractors in accordance with established best business practices. Subject to state sunshine laws, an SBD is led by a seven member Board of Commissioners chosen from the neighborhood and term-limited. The SBD and its property tax will also be term-limited to only five years; if the neighborhood then wants to extend the tax for additional years, another ordinance and another election would be required.

### **Q: HOW IS A SPECIAL BUSINESS DISTRICT ESTABLISHED? [II-2]**

**A:** Special Business Districts are established by local election. Forming an SBD for Lafayette Square begins with the submission of a petition to the St. Louis Board of Aldermen, which may then adopt an ordinance to form the SBD. Upon approval of the SBD by the city, the level of the SBD tax increment must then be approved by residents in an election. Plans are to have the SBD measure on the ballot in the city election set for April 2015. All registered voting residents of the district are eligible to vote on the SBD measure. In addition, non-residents who own business property or are licensed business owners in the district may apply to the city for a special ballot for voting on the SBD measure. To ensure that neighborhood residents and property owners are fully informed before the vote in April, there will be a series of public meetings and full documentation of the board’s operating documents will be available for review on-line. In addition the neighborhood will have repeated opportunities to ask questions, make suggestions, and participate in the development process.

### **Q: WHO WILL BE IN CHARGE OF THE SPECIAL BUSINESS DISTRICT? [II-3]**

**A:** The neighborhood itself will be in charge of the SBD. Governance of the Special Business District will be open and fully transparent in accordance with state sunshine laws. By-laws will be developed by the neighborhood, and meeting minutes and other records will be easily available on-line. Residential property owners, renters, commercial property owners, and business owners will be represented on the SBD’s very hard-working seven-member Board of Commissioners. When it is up and running, SBD financial operations will be subject to independent third party audits every two years. In accordance with the ordinance forming the SBD, the Board will draw its members from qualified property owners, renters, and business owners with careful attention to representing all parts of the neighborhood, and to drawing on the established experience base offered by the memberships of the Lafayette Square Restoration Committee, the Lafayette Park Conservancy, the Lafayette Square Arts Council, and the Lafayette Square

Business Association. Seasoned neighborhood pioneers and emerging leaders will thus work together in providing responsive oversight for the SBD.

**Q: HOW WILL MEMBERS OF THE SBD BOARD BE SELECTED? [II-4]**

**A:** Qualified board candidates may be proposed by the neighborhood or may apply by using the application form available on-line (at [www.lafayettesquare.org/sbd](http://www.lafayettesquare.org/sbd)). In consultation with the neighborhood, our Alderwomen will select a slate of seven commissioners and two alternates after reviewing all applications. The mayor will provide final approval of the board. One of the biggest challenges for the board will be providing effective and experience-based project management for individual improvement efforts, many of which will require long hours of planning, coordination and communications, meetings, schedule and budget management, operational oversight, performance management, and detailed reporting to the neighborhood. Qualifications for a position on the seven-member board include experience in areas like business administration and management, neighborhood organizations, management of capital projects, accounting and bookkeeping, communications, security, urban planning, architecture, engineering, construction, organizational management, civic organizations, fund raising, and community relations.

**Q: HOW WILL THE SPECIAL BUSINESS DISTRICT COLLECT REVENUES? [II-5]**

**A:** Revenues for the Lafayette Square Special Business District would be generated through a pre-defined yearly tax on residential and business property owners collected by the City of St. Louis and administered by the seven-member Board of Commissioners made up of people from the neighborhood. The level of the yearly tax is also approved by the neighborhood in an open election, and can be subsequently adjusted by the neighborhood within predefined limits. The funds raised by an SBD are additive in that they augment and supplement (but do not replace) traditional city funds for the neighborhood. They also supplement funds from other public and private funding sources, including grants and donations. In addition, SBD revenues can be used as matching funds to increase the size of grants and donations. For more detailed information on revenue targets and how the increase relates to your own property values, see Section III below.

**Q: ARE OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS IN OUR AREA TAKING ADVANTAGE OF SPECIAL BUSINESS DISTRICT REVENUES? [II-6]**

**A:** Lafayette Square is lagging considerably behind more than 20 other St. Louis neighborhoods who have been benefitting for some time from the funding mechanism provided by Special Business Districts. These include the Central West End North, Central West End South, and Central West End Southeast Special Business Districts as well as SBDs for the Soulard, Cherokee/Lemp, Cherokee Station, Locust Center, Parkview Garden, and Tower Grove South neighborhoods. In a number of these neighborhoods the SBDs are already in their second or even third generations. The SBD Study Committee is working closely with a number of professionals who have hands-on experience in what has worked and not worked for other SBDs.

**Q: ARE SPECIAL DISTRICTS BEING USED IN OTHER CITIES? [II-7]**

**A:** Nationwide and even worldwide, various versions and forms of the special business district concept are challenging and successfully reshaping traditional assumptions about city neighborhood problem-solving and opportunity generation. The special district concept has been praised for its effectiveness in putting significant resources back in the hands of the most local of all government levels, the neighborhood. Key to this reshaping is the creation of a distinctive form of effective, responsive,

collaborative, citizen-driven governance. In many states and cities, the special district concept is becoming a mainstream policy and management tool which enables neighborhoods, in collaboration with their business districts, to combine entrepreneurship and social capital and accomplish community revitalization and development efforts that might otherwise be impossible.

**Q: HOW WILL THE SBD FOCUS ON AND BENEFIT *OUR* NEIGHBORHOOD? [II-8]**

**A:** The Lafayette Square neighborhood, with about 2,100 diverse residents, includes families with children, singles, couples, professionals, home owners and home renters, business owners, and retirees. It is known nationwide for its unique cultural and historic character. The neighborhood also has unique obligations: to preserve, maintain, and improve one of the nation's best remaining enclaves of Victorian homes; to protect the unique 30-acre Victorian walking park with its stately, custom-designed 145-year-old iron fence which anchors the neighborhood; and to provide its residents and visitors with the security, services, and infrastructure enhancements needed for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Special Business District will ensure that all funds collected are spent in Lafayette Square, and only in Lafayette Square, on key public improvements that are currently unfunded or underfunded. It is thus a collaborative way for everyone to participate in reclaiming and sustaining this one-of-a-kind neighborhood. SBD dollars will help fund neighborhood projects that otherwise could not happen, or would have to be deferred for years. In addition, because the SBD as a state entity can generally work outside the city's complex project contracting structure, individual projects will be much more cost effective and more quickly executed. The SBD takes nothing away from the city. We achieve all these objectives without lessening the city's tax base and without reducing funding for schools.

**Q: WHY DOES THE SBD PETITION TALK ABOUT SHOPPING MALLS AND AQUARIUMS? [II-9]**

**A:** To respect the state of Missouri's statutory processes for establishing SBDs, the enacting petition has been drafted to faithfully echo the generic language of the statutes and to comply fully with the state's requirements. Those shopping malls and other features were offered by the statute's authors as examples of the kinds of improvements many cities might want to consider. They are by no means under consideration for our neighborhood. In accordance with the state requirements, once the SBD is constituted and its commissioners are approved by the city, it still must be approved by the voters. Only when that happens will the SBD's planning, budgeting, scheduling, and decision-making processes be enabled and get down to clear specifics based on active neighborhood inputs solicited in public forums.

### III. WHAT ARE THE SBD'S REVENUE TARGETS FOR THE LAFAYETTE SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD?

**Q: WHAT KINDS OF INCREASES WOULD INDIVIDUAL RESIDENTS BE SEEING? [III-1]**

**A:** All of the SBD benefits described above would accrue as the result of a relatively modest boost in property taxes on Lafayette Square residents and business owners. Passage of the SBD at 85 cents on each \$100 of assessed valuation, the highest level the neighborhood could choose, would mean that more than two-thirds of Lafayette Square homeowners would see an increase of less than \$1 a day. Residents who rent rather than own their homes might see increases averaging 33 cents a day (about \$10 a month or \$120 a year) if the building owners pass along the costs of the SBD levy. The effects of rising property values and increased neighborhood amenities would act to offset these costs, and the improvements made possible by the SBD would bring best-value returns in areas prioritized by our own residents.

**Q: HOW WILL MY HOME'S VALUE AFFECT MY INCREASE? [III-2]**

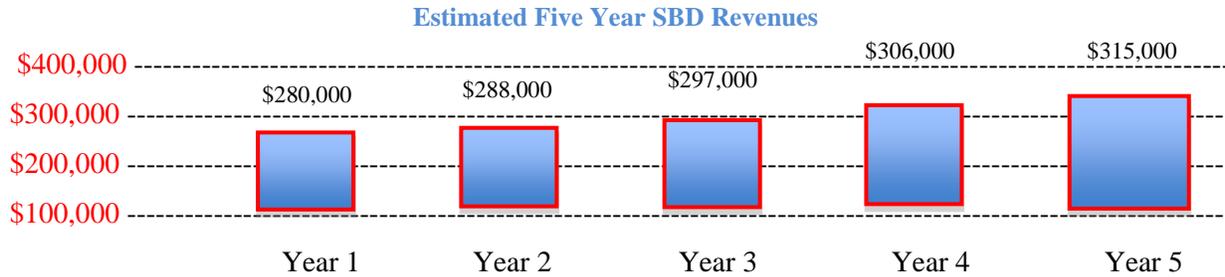
**A:** First it's important to distinguish between the *appraised value* of your home and the *assessed valuation* amount set for your home by the city. (Residential assessed valuations are 19% of the city's appraised values.) SBD rates apply to the lower of the two, the city's assessed valuation for your home, as listed in your most recent real property assessment notice. As shown in Table 1 below, a Lafayette Square home with an appraised value of \$300,000 would have an assessed valuation of about \$57,000. This means that with an SBD increase of 85¢ per \$100 of assessed evaluation, that homeowner would pay an additional property tax of about \$485 a year, or \$1.33 a day. That tax payment doesn't go away, however. The entire amount of the increase would stay right in the neighborhood to help fund major Lafayette Square improvements rather than disappearing into the general tax fund.

Your Home's Appraised Value	Your Home's Assessed Valuation	Your Annual Increase at 85¢ per \$100	Your Increase on a Daily Basis
\$100,000	\$19,000	\$162	About 44¢ a day
\$200,000	\$38,000	\$323	About 89¢ a day
\$300,000	\$57,000	\$485	About \$1.33 a day
\$400,000	\$76,000	\$646	About \$1.77 a day

**Table 1. Projected SBD increases for homes of four different appraised values calculated at 85¢ per \$100 of assessed evaluation.**

**Q: WOULD NEIGHBORHOOD REVENUES INCREASE OVER TIME? [III-3]**

**A:** Modest revenue increases could come with inflation. Conservatively estimated, with revenue increases based on 3% inflation, SBD revenues would grow, as shown in the bar graph below, to \$315 thousand a year in five years and with a cumulative total of \$1,486,000 at the end of that time.



**Q: DO THESE SBD REVENUES FULLY MEET LAFAYETTE SQUARE’S NEEDS? [III-4]**

**A:** No. Although the SBD will give us better resources than we’ve ever had for funding improvements in Lafayette Square, it won’t begin to pay for everything we need. The math is simple. Reasonable projections show that the total improvements needed could amount to \$10 million or more; as the charts above show, the SBD will raise less than \$1.5 million during its first term. Does the SBD still make sense? Yes, if we bring the neighborhood together and use SBD revenues as seed money to attract major support from outside the neighborhood. Because the SBD gives us much more substantial funds to work with, it can be and should be a major enabler for making dramatic progress in another part of the territory marked out by the 2001 Urban Plan: applications for outside grants and awards, and mounting a major capital campaign to raise substantial funds from outside the neighborhood. The SBD revenues would enable Lafayette Square to become much more effective in this arena, through such mechanisms as offering matching funds to foundation and corporate donors, and through supporting a concerted capital fund-raising campaign that would extend to pre-qualified donors nationwide. A number of our residents who have hands-on experience with multi-million-dollar capital campaigns have observed that Lafayette Square is perfectly poised to make strong appeals to previously untapped funding sources, and that with a judicious blend of volunteer and professional personnel and expertise our campaign costs could be modest.

**Q: WHAT IS THE OVERALL VALUE PROPOSITION FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD? [III-5]**

**A:** While no one wants to see a property tax increase, the SBD’s boost for individual residents is modest by most yardsticks and the cumulative returns for the neighborhood are large. It is important to remember that in the traditional sense of the term, a property tax is money paid by property owners that goes out of the neighborhood to be used as the government specifies in citywide locations and in broad applications. Conventional property taxes often provide little direct or immediate benefit to the neighborhood where they are levied. The funds raised by the Lafayette Square Special Business District, quite to the contrary, will stay in the neighborhood, will be used only for public improvements in the neighborhood, and will be used only as directed by residents of the neighborhood as represented on the SBD board. In addition, they can give us access to far greater funding sources from outside the neighborhood and give us the leverage we need to make this kind of access produce real results. The idea is that everyone contributes a little, and the neighborhood as a whole benefits a lot.

## **IV. WHAT ARE THE BOTTOM LINE BENEFITS OF THE SBD FOR LAFAYETTE SQUARE?**

**Q: WHAT KINDS OF IMPROVEMENTS AND SERVICISS WILL THE SBD FOCUS ON SPECIFICALLY? [IV-1]**

**A:** The Special Business District will enable Lafayette Square to:

- fund and maintain the remaining key projects outlined in the Urban Plan.\*
- identify, prioritize, and develop previously unaffordable public projects, thus moving needed improvements from a distant wish list to a near-term to-do list.
- meet our infrastructure maintenance obligations, preserve our unique heritage, and avoid the substantial hidden costs of deferred maintenance.
- fund the current safety and security efforts, keep the local police substation here, and, as needed, consider new measures such as secondary patrols by off-duty police officers.
- spark renewed revitalization and improve property values.
- revitalize public perceptions of the neighborhood's unique historic heritage.
- substantially improve quality of life in the neighborhood.
- draw a higher percentage of newer and younger residents into neighborhood engagement as emerging leaders to work side by side with experienced veterans.
- use matching funds to maximize public and private grants for specific projects.
- take advantage of substantially more competitive contractor rates on all development projects.
- achieve these goals without reducing the city's tax base and with no funding cuts for schools.

For 160 years Lafayette Square has always flourished when residents contributed their own resources to build and sustain the neighborhood. The SBD enables the neighborhood to return to this hands-on tradition.

\*The Lafayette Square neighborhood urban plan is available for review at <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/planning/documents/lafayette-square-neighborhood-urban-plan1.cfm>).

**Q: CAN ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENTS AND SERVICES BE PROPOSED FOR THE TO-DO LIST BY THE NEIGHBORHOOD? [IV-2]**

**A:** Additional ideas for the Lafayette Square to-do list are being actively sought now. In the two public forums held in the fall of 2014, neighbors made numerous good additions to a posted list. More additions can be made on-line any time at [www.lafayettesquare.org/sbd](http://www.lafayettesquare.org/sbd). We will continue to collaborate as a neighborhood, before and after the SBD is established, on items to add to the list and on the priority levels of individual improvements.

**Q: WILL THE SBD REALLY BENEFIT THE ENTIRE NEIGHBORHOOD? [IV-3]**

**A:** A primary responsibility of the Board of Commissioners, in accordance with the SBD by-laws, will be to make sure that the entire neighborhood benefits from the funds raised by the SBD. Preserving our historic public treasures like the park fence is one way to do this. Another way is to see that we take thoughtful and intelligent steps to ensure the neighborhood's safety and security. Still another is to make sure, as the state statute obviously intends, that our commissioners represent all areas and all demographics within the historic district. Lafayette Square is a genuinely diverse neighborhood with a real interest in preserving its diversity. Some of our residents live in historic homes overlooking the park. Others have businesses that operate in the increasingly thriving business district at Park Avenue and Mississippi. But just as important are the folks who live in contemporary apartments and restored

townhomes at the margins of the historic district. The northwest sector of the Square is clearly where our major development opportunities lie. How it is developed will affect everyone in the neighborhood, and it is in everyone's best interest that we manage these opportunities wisely. Improvements that focus only on the core of the neighborhood would be neglecting our full potential and ignoring what makes us vital and accessible to prospective new residents, to the flow of visitors drawn from outside, and to potential customers for our businesses. Already on a list of potential areas of focus for the SBD are (1) the installation of entry features at key northwest entry points like Chouteau and Missouri; (2) a historically-compatible demonstration lighting system in the NWQ that would show how to bring period-style street-level lighting, enhanced security, and a defining Victorian ambience back to Lafayette Square; and (3) a variety of measures to attract and enhance development prospects and optimize development quality in this part of the Square.

**Q: WITH MORE MONEY AVAILABLE, WHAT SHOULD WE SPEND IT ON FIRST? [IV-4]**

**A:** Intelligently building and prioritizing our new to-do list should be a collaborative effort that all our neighborhood residents and business owners participate in. Lafayette Square is both a National Historic District and a national model for neighborhood revitalization. Our unique heritage as a neighborhood, our truly impressive streetscape and park, and the way our residents genuinely treasure the Square as a diverse place to live, all mean that the SBD puts great new opportunities within our reach. The opportunities, as we know, are accompanied by sizeable obligations, including ambitious and expensive capital projects totally unlike those faced by other neighborhoods. Although the SBD will give us great new resources for funding improvements in Lafayette Square, it won't begin to pay for everything we need. What key things should we target first for the new funds? Some items show up near the top of almost everyone's list:

- Taking intelligent steps to ensure the safety and security of the neighborhood.
- Rescuing the park's historic fence and preserving it for our children and grandchildren
- Restoring the park's four corner entrance gates, many of them now lost or missing, to their past grandeur.
- Providing a period lighting system for the neighborhood that will recall our visual history, unify our streetscape, illuminate our walks rather than our streets, and enhance our security.
- Recreating the park's once magnificent pavilion and bandstand.
- Creating a neighborhood-wide system of historical markers that recall for residents and visitors the people who lived in these homes and walked these streets.
- Paying special attention to the needs of our NW quadrant, where most future development will take place.
- Effectively managing our annual maintenance obligations to protect our investment in public improvements.

One good idea that has been proposed: combine a number of these items into a single, highly visible demonstration project that would be affordable, would make a real difference soon, and would benefit every part of the neighborhood. An example: restoring all four of the park's corner entrance gates together, with integrated period lighting treatments for all four, in a dramatic return to the Square's Victorian heritage that would be visible night and day. The SBD puts this kind of decision-making squarely in the hands of the neighborhood, as represented by its own SBD Board.

**Q: DOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD GET TO VOTE ON SPECIFIC EXPENDITURES? [IV-5]**

**A:** No. The SBD is designed by state statute and in accordance with proven SBD models in many other states to *represent* the local neighborhood faithfully, to listen carefully to neighborhood residents, and to be responsive. However, the statute also gives the SBD Board of Commissioners the autonomy, management authority, and operational flexibility it needs to do business effectively. Alternative community improvement models studied elsewhere, including models relying on decision making by direct vote, have not proven to be effective.

**Q: HOW WILL THE SBD KNOW WHAT EVERYONE WANTS WITHOUT A VOTE? [IV-6]**

**A:** Both the SBD Board of Commissioners and the individual residents and property owners in the neighborhood will be responsible for establishing and participating actively in an engaged and informed SBD working environment. The Board must act in good faith to understand the community's needs and wishes and to respond to them. The community will be well served by the SBD only to the extent that individual residents are active and thoughtful in making the neighborhood's needs and wishes known to the board and in effectively monitoring the Board's performance. By design, the community gives the SBD its authority and has a variety of mechanisms available for influencing its actions and setting its directions.

**Q: WHY IS THE PARK FENCE SUCH A KEY PROJECT? [IV-7]**

**A:** The fence is a perfect example of the unique challenges our neighborhood faces in the size and complexity of its capital projects. The custom-designed iron fence surrounding our park is one of only a few of its kind left in the country, in a league with those at the Boston Public Garden and at Prospect Park in New York. The fence is so rare because few cities today can afford to create and maintain this kind of stately and enduring elegance. A hundred years of deferred maintenance have been interrupted only once, by an unsuccessful rehabilitation effort in the 1970s that may have actually made matters worse. Today the entire 4,100-foot fence, while parts of it are still imposing, is in fragile condition. Many sections are broken; 14 gates are missing; 43 fence posts are tottering; all 280 post foundations need replacement; and the limestone columns are visibly eroding. Restoration will require a complex phased effort over a period of years, including feasibility assessments, metallurgical analysis, stabilization, fabrication of missing sections using sand casting, section-by-section repairs, stripping and repainting of iron elements, and protective sealants for the columns. Ornamental iron contractors and foundries have been slow to take up the challenge and are hesitant to bid on a national heritage project of this kind. Special studies of the fence's unique metallurgy are underway now, however, and a reasonable ROM cost estimate for all repairs is one million dollars. The good news is that those who have studied the fence challenge thoroughly for years have concluded that a carefully phased effort supported by incremental funds could make rescue and turnaround a reality, with near-term steps serving to halt the long deterioration. A detailed report to the neighborhood on the fence, provided by Ward Buckner of the Lafayette Park Conservancy, will take place at a public forum in February, 2015.

**Q: WHAT KINDS OF THINGS COULD THE SBD DO TO ADDRESS SECURITY? [IV-7]**

**A:** No one intervention, or set of them, will stop criminal activity in any urban neighborhood, but many parts of Saint Louis have used the SBD model to help fund neighborhood safety initiatives. The CWE North SBD has devoted its total revenues to three on-going safety initiatives: street-level lighting systems; unmonitored security cameras; and secondary patrols by off duty police. Now crime is down there. The CWE North SBD (one of six in the CWE) has spent well over \$1,000,000 on increased neighborhood lighting, and spends more than \$280,000 a year hiring officers at \$50 an hour for secondary patrols, not counting administrative costs. Using our neighborhood's more limited resources in the most judicious way possible will be a complex task. Surprisingly, experience in many neighborhoods shows that deterrence can be much more effective, and more cost effective, than additional police presence on the street. Some CWE North SBD commissioners are convinced that their most effective security measure has been the added street-level lighting systems.

**Q: AREN'T OFF-DUTY POLICE PATROLS AND VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SURE SECURITY FIXES FOR OUR NEIGHBORHOOD? [IV-8]**

**A:** It seems logical, but probably not. Many people agree that there is not a single intervention to stop the perpetration of criminal activity. Many neighborhoods in Saint Louis City have employed the SBD model to help fund various safety initiatives. The first SBD in the City was the CWE North Business District. The CWE North SBD has historically spent their income on 3 major safety initiatives. These include adding lighting features, an integrated, all-encompassing network of security cameras, and secondary patrols. All of these are on-going, multi-year initiatives that work in conjunction with each other to help reduce their crime rate. The North SBD alone has spent well over \$1,000,000 on increased neighborhood lighting, and has budgeted more than \$280,000 per year for secondary patrols alone, not including the cost of managing the patrols or other security initiatives within their district.

Again, secondary patrols can be part of the solution. The CWE has seen a reduction in crime by employing multiple strategies. Several Lafayette Square neighbors have voiced concern about the dark roadways and dark paths in the neighborhood at night; the US Department of Justice states that improving street lighting can reduce crime. Secondary patrol presence and lighting improvements are both deterrents; not one or the other can eliminate crime. Spending the neighborhood's money in the most judicious way possible is a daunting task that would ultimately be up to the SBD Board of Commissioners.

**Q: WHO IS LEADING THE SPECIAL BUSINESS DISTRICT EXPLORATORY EFFORT FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD? [IV-9]**

**A:** Late in 2013, based on discussions that began in the neighborhood and continued at LSRC meetings, a volunteer study committee was formed to explore the pros and cons of creating a Special Business District for Lafayette Square. The committee grew to include 16 neighborhood residents and business owners, property owners, and apartment dwellers, working from the beginning with the benefit of sage advice from St. Louis Alderwomen Phyllis Young and Christine Ingrassia. The study committee includes representatives of the LSRC, the Park Conservancy, the Arts Council, the Lafayette Square Business Association, and a number of at-large members. Members are listed in the table below.

The Lafayette Square SBD Study Committee		
Pat Barber	Glenn Eckert	Kacey Cordes Mahrt
Matt Brazelton	Kate Francis	Matt Negri
Ward Buckner	Donna Hagerty-Payne	Houston Smith
Merry Dahms	Keith Houghton	Pete Snyder
Tom Dahms	Christine Ingrassia	Rachel Witt
Jay Divine	Eric Lemmo	Phyllis Young