

# ST. LOUIS HOUSING SOLUTIONS: ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM & LANDLORD ACCOUNTABILITY



## BLACK ST. LOUISANS ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED BY ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS IN THEIR OWN HOMES.

A recent report on environmental racism in St. Louis uncovered the startling ways in which Black city residents experience the harmful effects of environmental pollution and neglect. Mold, lead paint, and other pollutants threaten the health of Black families, while inefficient appliances hike up their energy bills.



**BLACK CHILDREN ARE 2.4X MORE LIKELY THAN WHITE CHILDREN IN STL TO TEST POSITIVELY FOR LEAD IN THEIR BLOOD.**



**MOLD COMPLAINTS ARE MORE COMMON IN STL'S MAJORITY BLACK NEIGHBORHOODS THAN ELSEWHERE IN THE CITY.**



**46% OF BLACK HOUSEHOLDS FACE ENERGY BURDENS THAT ARE MORE THAN TWICE THE CITYWIDE MEDIAN.**



## MISSOURI LAW DOES NOT ADEQUATELY PROTECT ST. LOUIS TENANTS.

Standard rental leases in Missouri include language of an "implied warranty of habitability"--requiring landlords to keep their properties livable for tenants. **This is an empty promise, because the law does not set specific standards for livable conditions nor does it require timely remediation.** Many Missouri tenants find it difficult to get their landlords to address complaints related to mold, lead paint, high energy bills, and other indoor environmental issues.

In order to protect St. Louis residents and address the longstanding effects of environmental racism, the city of St. Louis should adopt a local policy to hold landlords accountable to environmental quality standards.



# CONTEXT & IMPORTANCE

## INDOOR AIR POLLUTANTS AND HOUSING INEFFICIENCIES HAVE SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH, WELL-BEING, AND QUALITY OF LIFE.

LEAD



Lead is highly toxic, especially for children. There is no safe level of lead exposure. Lead poisoning in young people can lead to lasting damage to the brain and nervous system. Lead exposure is strongly associated with learning disabilities, behavioral issues, and criminal activity.

MOLD



Household mold is harmful to human health. Prolonged exposure to mold is correlated with respiratory issues, including coughing, sore throat, breathing difficulty, and asthma attacks.

ENERGY



High utility costs are often tied to poor housing weatherization and inefficient appliances. For low-income and underemployed folks, high home energy burdens are associated with evictions and housing instability.



## IN ST. LOUIS, LEAD POISONING, MOLD EXPOSURE, AND HIGH ENERGY COSTS DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACT BLACK HOUSEHOLDS—REFLECTING PATTERNS OF HOUSING DISCRIMINATION AND LEGACIES OF SYSTEMIC RACISM.

The City has been constructed to divide the community by race and income-level. Histories of redlining, police brutality and the War on Drugs, employment discrimination, and other forms of systematic violence against Black St. Louisans have contributed to racial disparities in homeownership and wealth accumulation. In 2015, only 39.9% of Black residents in St. Louis owned their own home, whereas 56.2% of white residents were homeowners. Consequently, the majority of Black St. Louisans are renters and must rely on their landlords to address issues of environmental quality. Unfortunately, there are few policy incentives for landlords to create high-quality living standards for Black and/or low-income tenants.

**WE CAN USE LOCAL TOOLS TO IMPROVE HOUSING CONDITIONS AND MITIGATE THE IMPACTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM.**





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## ENDNOTES

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