

ACADEMY (51)

LOCATION

The Academy neighborhood is bordered by Dr. Martin Luther King Drive to the North and Delmar Boulevard to the South. North Kingshighway Boulevard lies to its East and Union Boulevard lies to its West.

HISTORY

The Academy area was part of the westward expansion of the city and the rapid development of the Central West Corridor prior to and following the 1904 World's Fair. Established as an upper-middle-class community, this area was predominantly white until after World War II. After the war, the area saw an increase in African-American population. Currently, the area is predominantly African-American.

CHARACTERISTICS

Academy has a generally good housing stock due to the fact that houses are large and built for strength. The Academy neighborhood also seems to be more resistant than some of its neighboring communities to the decaying forces of flight from the city. One primary reason is that the neighborhood is composed mostly of single-family homes. There is a great variance throughout the neighborhood in individual home value, however, which has resulted in a median home value of around \$60,000.



The neighborhood's heritage is reflected in many of area's institutional buildings. The architecture of Soldan High School, alongside that of Clark School, gives the neighborhood a character not replicated in the construction of modern schools. Commercially, the Academy neighborhood is laid out so that there is a clear line of demarcation between business and residential areas. Unlike some neighborhoods that have or have had the corner-store kind of commerce intermingled throughout the community, businesses in the Academy are located primarily on the higher traffic streets of Delmar Boulevard, Union Boulevard, Kingshighway, and Dr. Martin Luther King Drive.

INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The Academy neighborhood is rich in educational institutions. Soldan High School is the area's secondary school and Clark School is its elementary school. Clark Elementary and Step by Step Preschool provide day-care service. Washington-Euclid Montessori provides for educational needs of children preschool age through fifth grade. Also housed at the Washington Montessori School is the Monsanto YMCA, which offers before- and after-school care for children 5 to 15. In addition, Academy is home to the Cabanne branch of the St. Louis Public Library. Special activities at the library include storytelling, arts and crafts, and movies.

Neighborhood residents have also quite a choice in religious institutions. Churches such as Maple Temple, New Light M.B. Church, Oasis of Life Church, Emmaus Church of God in Christ, Holy Metropolitan Baptist Church, Wayman A.M.E., and Pilgrim Congregational Church of Christ are spread throughout Academy. In addition to religious services, some of these churches also provide for social needs of the community. For example, Pilgrim Congregational offers services to many community members, including Meals on Wheels, Mentoring, Interfaith Housing Help, Habitat for Humanity, and Building an Inclusive Community. Westminster Presbyterian Church on Delmar is also the home of Housing Comes First and a food pantry.

The West End Community Center is a neighborhood asset for many. The building has recently undergone some renovations, including the finishing of a modern and beautiful auditorium. The Center, which houses activities for youth and adults, includes a gym, swimming pool, and weight room. Housed in this building is also the West End Community Conference, which [to be inserted].



The Dignity House is a neighborhood institution that offers a safe haven for children through recreational after-school activities and summer camp programs. In addition, senior citizens can take advantage of the day programs offered in arts and crafts. At the corner of Page and Union there is an attractive neighborhood garden, the Marie W. Fowler Park. The Academy neighborhood is also strengthened by the presence of the Area III Command Station of the Metropolitan Police Department.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Neighborhood organizations such as the Academy Neighborhood Association and the Raymond Block Unit have been instrumental in implementing efforts to revitalize the neighborhood. Together they formed two separate housing corporations, Academy Housing and Grams & Grands. They are working on a comprehensive neighborhood planning effort. The Academy Neighborhood Association has

recently purchased a vacant corner lot for the purpose of developing a community garden. The association is also actively preparing for a Housing Tour that they helped coordinate to showcase their neighborhood. The Housing Tour is a part of the Association's plan to proactively attract potential homebuyers and developers to their neighborhood.

Commercially, there are small signs of revitalization. For instance, there is a new Walgreens at Union Boulevard and Page Avenue. Academy suffers greatly, however, from the disinvestment of its main commercial thoroughfare, Dr. Martin Luther King Drive. This area is characterized by a cluttered, fragmented appearance that includes numerous vacant buildings, unattractive and deteriorated buildings and storefronts, and intermingled industrial- and warehouse-type activities.