

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 18, 2016

The Honorable Julian Castro  
Secretary  
US Department of Housing & Urban Development  
451 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Castro:

Several neighborhoods in St. Louis, Missouri are undergoing an important transformation that will completely reinvigorate the area. Residents, community stakeholders, and businesses in the North St. Louis City area are pleased to see increased investment and economic development in sections of the city that have long suffered from poverty and neglect. With projects such as the Northside Regeneration and National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA) getting underway, North St. Louis neighborhoods are poised for growth and rejuvenation. One in particular, the Near North Side neighborhood, stands in a strong position to gain from these improvements if provided with adequate investment. A HUD Choice Neighborhood grant for the Near North Side neighborhood would continue this good work and expand the benefits to the residents.

The Preservation Square development in the Near North Side neighborhood has long suffered from challenges and neglect. The Near North Side has a poverty rate of 44 percent, more than twice the poverty level for the city as a whole. Though there has been tremendous growth in St. Louis over the last several years, this particular area has been left behind. The median household income in the area is \$19,745, which is 43 percent lower than the household income for the city. The crime rate, public school drop-out rate, and public health indicators are similarly troubling.

St. Louis has the right community resources and potential that have allowed the region to be selected for many targeted federal government programs during the last several years. The Obama Administration named St. Louis to the Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative to help the metropolitan area strengthen local capacity, coordinate federal investments, and spark growth in economically distressed communities. In 2015, HUD designated high poverty areas of St. Louis City and County a Promise Zone, so that these areas could see increased economic activity, lower crime rates, improved education, and better public health. The Department of Labor worked with the Missouri Workforce Board to create a Career Pathways Bridge to help often overlooked communities get training that could lead to jobs.

Further, St. Louis' economic prospects are stronger than ever with news of NGA staying in St. Louis, along with the Northside Regeneration project getting underway. The NGA will soon build a \$1.75 billion federal facility on 99-acres in north St. Louis, where 3,000 federal employees will eventually work. The Choice Neighborhood grant would direct resources to

poverty stricken residential areas that border these areas, and ensure that the redevelopment and economic growth can extend to and benefit these longtime St. Louis residents.

St. Louis has the right partnerships on the ground to make these federal initiatives successful. The \$29.5 million requested from the 2016 Choice Neighborhood program could be transformative for this Near North Side community in St. Louis, and bring improved safety, new jobs, and better living standards to the residents of the area.

The current Administration has a track record of supporting our major cities, and pioneering federal programs meant to improve those in economically disadvantaged areas. The St. Louis proposal is deserving of the 2016 Choice Neighborhood grant, and has my full endorsement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Claire McCaskill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Claire" being more prominent and the last name "McCaskill" following in a similar style.

Claire McCaskill  
U.S. Senator