

**S0162 St. Louis Regional Commerce And Growth Association
(1971-), Records, 1912-1980
494 Folders**

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The St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association donated their records to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection-St. Louis on January 16 and February 16, 1983. Included are records from the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce, the Metropolitan Plan Commission, St. Louis Research Council, and the St. Louis Regional Industrial Development Corporation (RIDC). The oldest organization, the Chamber of Commerce, was established in 1837 by local merchants and traders. Both St. Louis city and county had chambers and by the early twentieth century, they were urging regional planning and approaches. The difficulties in governing and planning between the hundreds of area municipalities prompted the Chamber to support a 1920 state amendment to merge the city and county (the amendment was defeated by voters). The Chamber consistently supported efforts at planned development of the region across local governing lines, such as the formation the Metropolitan Sewer District in 1954. Following its own advice, the county and city chambers consolidated in 1963.

The Metropolitan Plan Association began in 1944. Chaired by Stuart Symington, it made a master plan for the metropolitan area to aid in public improvements and provide jobs for those who became unemployed after World War II. It also promoted planned development for the region until its demise in the 1960s.

1. For information on the early history of the Chamber, see History of St. Louis, J. Thomas Scharf, p. 1340, "Commercial Exchanges."

In 1963 the Chamber of Commerce and Civic Progress sponsored a voluntary Committee made up of members of the Chamber, Civic Progress, Washington U. and St. Louis U. to form the St. Louis Research Council. Its purpose was to aid the industrial, commercial, educational, and civic organizations of St. Louis in the development and promotion of the community as a major and nationally recognized scientific, educational and research center. In 1969 it affiliated with the Regional Industrial Development Corporation.

Citizens concerned with St. Louis' decline in industrial development after World War II felt the city was hampered by a myriad of geographic, economic, and political rivalries. Ninety-three organizations and agencies representing business, labor, government, education, and civic groups from St. Louis City, St. Louis County, and Franklin, Jefferson, St. Charles, Madison, Monroe and St. Clair counties, officially founded the St. Louis Regional Industrial Development Corporation in 1965. They claimed RIDC represented the first area-wide approach to the problem, apparently forgetting the Metropolitan Plan. RIDC had the commitment and financial support of labor, business, government, education, and civic leaders.

RIDC identified its task as coordinating the industrial promotion and development of the 4600 square mile area. It would define the problems, assemble the facts and present the results to "those who must hear it and heed it if the St. Louis region is to grow." In 1968 it defined nine goals for itself:

- 1) help provide jobs for region's growing work force and for unskilled to solve problems of both unemployment and the ghetto.
- 2) promote labor-management stability to create a climate in which industry can grow.
- 3) conduct economic research to identify business opportunities for new and existing firms and impediments to economic growth.
- 4) improve terminal and transshipment facilities.
- 5) improve the region's image.
- 6) encourage political unity to increase government efficiency.
- 7) provide labor training and retraining programs to make the work force responsive to technological change.
- 8) improve the region's total living environment.
- 9) create a pool of risk capital to be used as seed money for science-oriented industry.

In September 1971 the RIDC, the Chamber, and the Research Council merged to form the Regional Commerce and Growth Association. With Civic Progress as the overseer of civic and economic planning, RCGA has functioned as the "action arm"--implementing CP's goals, representing St. Louis business interests nationally, and collecting and publicizing information on the region.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association records contain material from five other organizations, the City Plan Commission, Metropolitan Plan Association, St. Louis Research Council, Chamber of Commerce, and the Regional Industrial Development Corporation. Administrative files and reports and studies from each organization are the major types of records. Most of the records are from the RIDC, which preceded the RCGA. Earlier records of the Chamber of Commerce are located at Missouri Historical Society and the Washington University Archives.

All of these organizations promoted regional cooperation and planning for the development of the area's resources. Taken in sequence the records show how local businessmen increased their support for regional planning as the twentieth century progressed. RCGA and RIDC's reports and studies provided economic and sociological analyses of urban problems in transportation, public works, labor, the environment, capital investment, manufacturing, industrial education, and employment. They also provide statistical data on these problems.

SERIES DESCRIPTION

1. CITY PLAN COMMISSION, 1912-1916, FOLDERS 1-3

Three reports on the Central Traffic Parkway and River Des Peres. Arranged chronologically

2. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, 1928-1975 FOLDERS 4-48

Divided into four sub-series: administrative (arranged chronologically), financial records (arranged alphabetically), office files (arranged alphabetically), and reports (arranged alphabetically). Includes minutes of the executive committee and board of directors, audits, budgets, correspondence, newsclippings, and legal documents. Topics of reports are: Lambert Airport, Laclede's Landing, transportation, and the Trans Pacific Airline route case .

3. METROPOLITAN PLAN ASSOCIATION, 1945-1961, FOLDER 49

Minutes, correspondence, annual reports, Arranged chronologically by form.

4. ST. LOUIS RESEARCH COUNCIL, 1962-1974, FOLDERS 50-56

Minutes, correspondence, and material from merger with the Regional Development Industrial Corporation. Arranged alphabetically by folder.

5. ST LOUIS REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (RIDC), 1950-1974, FOLDERS 57-427

Divided into two sub-series: administrative records and reference files, arranged alphabetically by folder. Annual reports, articles of incorporation, bylaws, budgets, correspondence, minutes, press releases, reports, studies, publications, newsclippings, proposals, surveys, and committee material. Reference topics include: auto parts capability, census information, congressional correspondence, East-West Gateway Coordinating Councils industrial education committee, jobs in the ghetto, labor skills survey, model cities, regional economic data bank, seminars and speaking engagements, and venture capital.

6. ST. LOUIS REGIONAL COMMERCE AND GROWTH ASSOCIATION (RCGA), 1971-1977, FOLDERS 428-440

Administrative files and financial records, arranged chronologically by folder.

7. NON-RIDC STUDIES AND REPORTS, 1962-1980, FOLDERS 441-468

Topics include: air transportation, East St. Louis, education, health, Lambert Airport, Meramec Industrial Park, Mississippi River, and St. Louis City and County. Arranged alphabetically by topic.

8. RIDC PUBLICATIONS, 1963-1972, FOLDERS 469-494

Official studies and reports. Topics include: air transportation, automotive industry, career education, East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, employment, freight city, industrial development, labor, modular homes, Ozark regional commission, rail facilities, retail sales, transportation and venture capital . Arranged alphabetically by topic.

FOLDER LIST

BOX 1 (72583)

FOLDERS 1-17

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION, Folders 1-4

1. Central Traffic Parkway - 1912
2. Central Traffic Parkway , Prepared Amendment to the City Charter, 1913
3. The Riverfront, Possible Municipal Ownership of Terminals, 1913
4. River Des Peres Plan, 1916

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, ADMINISTRATIVE, Folders 5-9

5. Executive Committee and Board of Directors, 1960-1970
6. Executive Committee and Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, 1960
7. Executive Committee and Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, 1961
8. Executive Committee and Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, 1962
9. Executive Committee and Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, 1963
10. Executive Committee and Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, 1964
11. Executive Committee and Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, 1965
12. Executive Committee and Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, 1966
13. Executive Committee and Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, 1967
14. Executive Committee and Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, 1968
15. Board of Directors' Minutes, 1969
16. Executive Committee Minutes, 1969

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, Folders 17 and 18

17. Board of Directors' Minutes, 1970

BOX 2 (72584)

FOLDERS 18-32

18. Executive Committee Minutes, 1970
19. Executive Committee and Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, 1971
20. Executive Committee and Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes , 1971

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, FINANCIAL RECORDS, Folders 21-27

21. Audits, 1928-1938
22. Audits, 1939-1949
23. Audits, 1950-1960
24. Audits, 1961-1970
25. Budgets, 1955-1966
26. Monthly Audits and Yearly Auditors' Reports, 1960-1964
27. Pension, 1956

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OFFICE FILES, Folders 28-38

28. Economic Development Plan, 1965
29. Historical Records, n.d.
30. Integrated Developments, 1964
31. Merchants and Manufacturers' Tax, 1958-1968
32. Newsclippings, 1968-1969

BOX 3 (72585)

FOLDERS 33-43

33. Trans Pacific Case, 1966-1969
34. Trans Pacific Case, 1969

35. Trans Pacific Case, 1969
36. Trans Pacific Case, 1969
37. Trans Pacific Case, Newsclippings, 1969
38. U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Survey, 1968

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORTS, Folders 39-49

39. Abstracts of New Major Regional Airport Studies, 1971
40. Airport Plan for the St. Louis Region, 1949
41. Airport Development Plan, 1945
42. Should a Metropolitan Airport Authority be Established for the St. Louis Area, 1968

43. An Analysis of Airport Travel Demands, 1969

44. Lambert Airport, 1971-1975
45. Laclede's Landing, 1968-1969
46. River Center, 1968
47. Transportation Studies, 1968-1970
48. Transportation Studies, 1971-1972

BOX 4 (72586)

49. Metropolitan Plan Association, Annual Reports and Meeting Minutes, 1945-1961

ST. LOUIS RESEARCH COUNCIL, Folders 50-56

50. Affiliation with Chamber of Commerce, 1969
51. Affiliation with RIDC, 1969-1970
52. Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes~ 1963-1964, 1973
53. General, 1962-1964
54. Pension Trust Fund, 1972-1973
55. Post Office Permit, 1972
56. Program Authorizations, 1974

RIDC - ADMINISTRATIVE, 57-83

57. Annual Meeting, (RIDC founding meeting), 1965
58. Annual Meeting, 1st - July 7, 1966
59. Annual Meeting, 2nd - September, 1967
60. Annual Meeting, 3rd - November 11, 1968
61. Annual Meeting, 4th - November 14, 1969
62. Annual Meeting, December 10, 1970
63. Annual Meeting, December 14, 1971
64. Annual Meeting, 1979, 3/29/73
65. Annual Luncheon, 1972 Lists, 3/29/73
66. Annual Reports, 1965-1972; 1981
67. Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws
68. Board of Directors - Terms of Office, 1969
69. Bibliography (RIDC Publications), 1971-1973
70. Budget, 1972
71. Budget, 1973
72. Budget, Funding Requests, 1972-1973

BOX 5 (72587)

FOLDERS 73-103

- 73. Contracts, 1968-1973
- 74. Contracts, Income, 1970-1971
- 75. Executive Committee Misc. Correspondence
- 76. Executive Committee Minutes, 1965-1967
- 77. Executive Committee Minutes, 1968-1969
- 78. Executive Committee Minutes, 1970-1972
- 79. Executive Committee Minutes, 1973
- 80. Fact Sheets on RIDC, 1970, 1972
- 81. RIDC, Publicity, 1969-1970
- 82. Remarks by D. Reid Ross, 1969-1970
- 83. Resolutions, 1971

RIDC - REFERENCE, Folders 84-92

- 84. Air Pollution, 1971
- 85. Airport Authority, 1971
- 86. American Institute of Planners, St. Louis section, 1968-1969
- 87. A.M.E. Church Extension, Truss Feasibility Study, 1971
- 88. American Statistical Association, 1966
- 89. Anheuser-Busch, Inc. Correspondence, 1969
- 90. Area Development--Sites and Facility Planning, 1971
- 91. Ascending Citizens Development Co., n.d.
- 92. Aviation Advisory Commission Correspondence, 1970

AUTO PARTS CAPABILITY, Folders 93-105

- 93. Auto Parts Capability, 1965-1968
- 94. Automotive Forecasts, 1950-1960
- 95. Automotive Forecasts, 1965-1966
- 96. Automotive Forecasts, 1967-1969
- 97. Automotive Forecasts, 1970-1980
- 98. Capability Questionnaire, 1966 99. Capability Questionnaire, 1966
- 100. Capability Questionnaire, 1966
- 101. Correspondence, 1965-1966
- 102. Electric Auto Parts, Newsclippings, 1968
- 103. Freight Rates, 1967

BOX 6 (72588)

FOLDERS 104-149

- 104. Statistics, 1967
- 105. Auto Parts Manufacturing, 1968

AUTO PARTS STUDY (OZARK REGIONAL COMMERCE), Folders 106-118

- 106. Annual Report, Ozark Regional Commerce, 1968
- 107. Correspondence, 1969
- 108. Education Statistics, 1969-1970
- 109. Financing, 1969-1970
- 110. Labor Statistics, 1968-1969
- 111. Labor Trends, 1968-1969

112. Local Industry Survey to Determine Interest and Capability of Manufacturing, 1969

113. Mailing Lists, 1969

114. Newsclippings, 1967-1968

115. Other Statistics, 1966-1969

116. Ozarks Regional Commission, General, n.d.

117. Plants of U.S. Motor Vehicle Manufacturers in the United States and Canada 1968 and 1969

118. Proposal for the Implementation of the Auto Parts Study and Survey of Ozarks Manufacturers, October 1970

119. Bi-State Development Agency Mass Transportation Study, 1968

BI-STATE REGIONAL MEDICAL PROGRAM, Folders 120-122

120. Bi-State Regional Medical Program, 1971

121. Bi-State Development Regional Medical Program, Proposal, 1972-1973

122. Bi-State Development Regional Medical Program, Correspondence, 1972

123. Black Enterprise Today, 1969

124. Brain Drain, 1968

125. Building Permit Correspondence, 1970

126. Building Trades, n.d.

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE COMMITTEE, Folders 127-130

127. Business Enterprise Committee - Career Education Material, 1974

128. Business Enterprise Committee - Meeting forms, 1974

129. Business Enterprise Committee - Minutes, 1973-1974

130. Business Enterprise Committee, Rotary Club, 1973

131. Business Resource Center, General, 1973-1974

132. Business Resource Center, Handbook, 1973

133. Business Resource Center, Lease Agreement, 1972

134. Business Resource Center, Proposal, 1972

135. Business Resource Center, Funding, 1973

136. Business Resource Center, General, 1972-1974

137. Camps Committee, Area III, 1971

CENSUS INFORMATION, Folders 138-149

138. Census Information Consortiums 1970

139. Census Information Consortiums, Bills sent, 1971-1973

140. Census Information Consortiums, Census Agreement, 1971

141. Census Information Consortiums, Co-sponsor Agreement, n.d.

142. Census Information Consortiums, Correspondence, 1971

143. Census Information Consortiums, Form Letters, n.d.

144. Census Information Consortium, "Information Deficiencies," Master and Outline of Rules and Regulations - 12/72

145. Census Information Consortium, Lists, 1971

146. Census Information Consortium, Progress Report 1971

147. Census Information Consortium, Press Conference, 6/10/71
148. Census Information Consortium, Questionnaire, 1973
149. Census Information Consortium, Questionnaire, Summary Tapes, 1970

BOX 7 (72589)

FOLDERS 150-190

CENTROPOLIS OR METROPOLIS, Folders 150-153

150. Centropolis or Metropolis, Various Drafts, 1965-1968
151. Centropolis or Metropolis, Annuals Correspondence, 1966-1968
152. Centropolis or Metropolis, Background Material, 1964-1969
153. Centropolis or Metropolis, Correspondence, 1965-1968
154. Chemical Industry, 1967
155. Citizens' Committee for a Regional Airport, 1971
156. Commerce and Industrial Development, Missouri Division, 1968-1969
157. Community Development--Need (Speech), n.d.
158. Community Profile, 1964-1965
159. Community Relations Service Correspondence, 1969-1971
160. Comprehensive City Demonstration Program, 1969
161. Conference, 1968-1970
162. Congressional Correspondence, 1965
163. Congressional Correspondence, 1966
164. Congressional Correspondence, 1967
165. Congressional Correspondence, 1968-1969
166. Congressional Correspondence, 1970
167. Corps of Engineers Proposal, 1968-1971
168. Corps of Engineers Statements for Locks and Dam, 1967-1972
169. Comparative Advantage Study, 1968-1969
170. Direct Investment in the United States by Japanese Firms, 1973-1974
171. Direct Investment in the United States by Japanese Firms, Briefing Papers, 1970-1973

172. Dodge Reports, 1969-1970
173. East St. Louis Railroad Relocation Correspondence, 1970
174. East St. Louis Riverfront Park, n.d.
175. Economic Research Committee, 1965-1969

EAST-WEST GATEWAY COORDINATING COUNCIL, Folders 176-194

176. Bibliography, 1967-1971
177. Data Processing Standards, 1969
178. Development of Input/Output Flow Table, 1967-1968
179. Draft Proposal, 1973
180. General, 1966-1973
181. General Correspondence, 1967-1969
182. Information Services Committee, 1970-1971
183. Planning File Maintenance and Aggregation Procedures, Systems Description Manual. 1970

184. Regional Housing Plan, 1970-1972
185. RIDC Joint Committee. 1968-1970

186. RIDC Product Flow Study, 1967-1968
187. RIDC Product Flow Study, 1968
188. RIDC Product Flow Study, Questionnaire and Letters, 1966-1968
189. Shift Analysis, 1967
190. Transportation Task Force, 1971-1972

BOX 8 (72590)

FOLDERS 191-241

191. Transportation Task Force, 1972
192. Transportation Task Force, 1973
193. Transportation Task Force, 1973
194. Transportation Task Force, 1973
195. Economic Growth Potential for the City of St. Louis, n.d.
196. Educational Confederation, 1971
197. Employers of Data Processing Technicians, n.d.
198. EDA Applications, 1966-1969
199. Economic Indications for St. Louis, 1968
200. Education Council - Proposal for Regional Library
201. Growth in Electronic Employment, 1964-1967
202. Employment Changes in St. Louis City vs. St. Louis County, 1962-1971
203. Employment Growth (%), 1968
204. Employment Impact - Aircraft and Parts Industry
205. Federal Executive Board Correspondence, 1968-1970
206. Firms wanting help to expand in RIDC area, 1966
207. Forest Park Community College, Cooperative Education, 1971
208. Louis D. Beaumont Foundation, 1968-1973
209. Foundation - General Materials, 1966-1972
210. Danforth Foundation Appendix, 1968-1969
211. Danforth Foundation Correspondence, 1969-1972
212. Four State Conference in Pittsburgh, Kansas, 1/6 - 7/72
213. "The Greater Hartford Process," by M.A. Atkinson, Jr., 2-day workshop, 1973
214. Industrial and Commercial Building Survey~ 1970
215. Industrial Development, 1963-1965
216. Industrial Development, 1966

INDUSTRY EDUCATION COMMITTEE, Folders 217-227

217. Correspondence, Minutes, 1965
218. Correspondence, Minutes, 1966
219. Correspondence, Minutes, 1967
220. Correspondence, Minutes, 1968
221. Correspondence, Minutes, 1969
222. Correspondence, Minutes, 1970
223. Correspondence, Minutes, 1971
224. Correspondence, Minutes, 1971-1972
225. Correspondence, Minutes, 1972
226. Correspondence, Minutes, 1973
227. General, 1969-1972

INPUT-OUTPUT STUDY, Folders 228-235

- 228. General, 1963-1966
- 229. Company Codes, 1966
- 230. Firms Closing or Leaving St. Louis Area, 1965
- 231. The implementation of a multi-regional input-output model for the United States, 1970

- 232. Input-Output Model of the St. Louis Region, 1967-1972
- 233. Inter-Industrial Structure Analysis: An Input-Output Study of the St. Louis Region, 1967

- 234. Outline for discussion on Application of I/O Tables, n.d.
- 235. Primer on Input-Output Economics, 1967
- 236. Inter-Governmental Relations Committee, 1965-1968
- 237. Inter-Regional Trade, 1971

JOBS IN THE GHETTO, Folders 238-244

- 238. Aldermanic Conference on Low Income Housing, 1969
- 239. Background, 1968-1969
- 240. Correspondence, 1968-1969
- 241. Directory of Black-Owned Businesses, St. Louis, MO., 1969

BOX 9 (72591)

FOLDERS 242-273

- 242. General, 1968-1969
- 243. Newsclippings on Black Business, 1968-1969

LABOR SKILLS SURVEY, Folders 244-255

- 244. Reports, 1968-1969
- 245. Applications for Reimbursement, 1967
- 246. Apprentice Training Actions, 1963-1966
- 247. Background, 1967
- 248. A Comprehensive Manpower Plan of St. Louis Human Development Corp., 1965
- 249. Correspondence, 1966-1967
- 250. Firm Surveys, 1966-1967
- 251. Illinois Skill Survey List, c.1967
- 252. Outline of Report, 1967
- 253. Request for approval of Research Project, 1967
- 254. Student Labor, 1967
- 255. Occupations Survey, 1967
- 256. Manpower Planning Council, 1972
- 257. The Mayor's Council on Youth, 1973
- 258. Metal Parts Survey, 1965
- 259. Metropolitan Sewer District, 1968
- 260. Midwest Research Institute, 1967
- 261. Mining Equipment Study, 1967
- 262. Minority Business Week, 1972
- 263. Minority Enterprise Small Business Investment Corp., 1970-1971
- 264. Missouri, Correspondence, 1966-1970

- 265. Missouri Development Credit Corporation, 1968-1970
- 266. Missouri Taxes, 1967
- 267. MACUE, 1969-1971
- 268. Missouri Advisory Council on Vocational Education, 1971-1972
- 269. Missouri Advisory Council on Vocational Education, 1972
- 270. Missouri Political District, 1966
- 271. Missouri Vocational Technical, 1969-1971

MODEL CITIES, Folders, 272-276

- 272. General, 1966
- 273. General, 1966

BOX 10 (72592)

FOLDERS 274-310

- 274. General, 1967
- 275. General, 1967
- 276. Area Economic Estimates, 1970

MODULAR HOUSING, Folders 277-280

- 277. Locational Considerations, 1971
- 278. General, 1968-1970
- 279. Analysis of the St. Louis Missouri-Illinois Housing Market, as of August, 1965; May, 1966

- 280. Housing - An East St. Louis Challenge, 1966
- 281. Municipal Business Development Committee, 1968-1970
- 282. National Park, East St. Louis Riverfront, 1974
- 283. National Regional Development Program, 1973

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION, Folders 284-293

- 284. General, 1965-1972
- 285. General, 1972
- 286. Research Applied to National Needs, 1974
- 287. National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, Correspondence, 1970-71

- 288. National Advisory Council, Newsclippings, 1971
- 289. National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Correspondence, 1971
- 290. National Planning Association, Correspondence, 1966-1967
- 291. New and Expanding Industries, n.d.
- 292. New Institutions to Serve the Region, 1968-1969
- 293. Pledges, No-strike Jurisdictional Disputes, 1968

NORTHERN NATURAL GAS, Folders 294-296

- 294. Correspondence, 1967
- 295. General, c.1967
- 296. Petrochemical Complex, 1967
- 297. Office for Industrial Development Studies, n.d.
- 298. Office of Economic Opportunity, 1969-1970

- 299. Ombudsman, 1967
- 300. "Operation Detroit," June 7-12, 1970

OTHER COMMITTEES, FOLDERS 301-306

- 301. Adult Education Council, 1972
- 302. Advertising and Public Relations Committee, 1970
- 303. Alliance for Shaping Safer Community, 1972
- 304. Business Enterprise Committee, Minute Master, 1974
- 305. Area Voc-Tech Council, 1970-1972
- 306. White House Conference on Education, 1972
- 307. Outlook, 1965-1966
- 308. Paper Products, 1968
- 309. Population Data, 1967
- 310. Population Statistics, 1960-1965

BOX 11 (72593)

FOLDERS 311-359

- 311. Post-Dispatch Correspondence, 1968
- 312. Post-Vietnam Economic Conversion, 1971
- 313. Program Appraisal Committee, 1966-1970
- 314. Proposal to Analyze the form and impact of merger of St. Louis City and St. Louis County, n.d.

- 315. Property Tax Effect on Economic Development, c.1970
- 316. Rail Facilities. Background, 1965-1966
- 317. Rail Facilities, Correspondence, 1968
- 318. Rail Facilities, Gateway, Gateway or Bottleneck, 1968
- 319. Rail Facilities, Program and Persons Attending, 1968
- 320. Refuse Disposal in St. Louis, 1967
- 321. Research Development, Summary of Departments, 1969
- 322. Research Staff Resumes, 1969-1970
- REGIONAL ECONOMIC DATA BANK, Folders 323-337**
- 323. Correspondence, 1966-1970
- 324. Foundation Report, 1966
- 325. General, 1964-1966
- 326. General, 1966-1967
- 327. Illinois 701 Study, n.d.
- 328. Industry Profile Coding, 1970
- 329. Information Reretrieval Colloquium, 1969
- 330. Input/Output Conference, 1970
- 331. Mini-Bank Planning Committee, 1968
- 332. Senator Edward Long Correspondence, 1967
- 333. Urban Information System for St. Louis Region, 1968
- 334. Urban Information Systems, 1968
- 335. Resources, Inc., 1966-1968
- 336. Resources, Inc., 1969
- 337. Planning Proposal to East St. Louis, 1968

RIDC - GENERAL, Folders 338-343

- 338. RIDC, Activities Affecting the St. Louis Area, 1972
- 339. RIDC, Affiliation Agreements, 1971
- 340. RIDC, Companies Assisted, 1973
- 341. RIDC, Correspondence, 1969
- 342. RIDC, Fact Sheet, 1972
- 343. RIDC, Financial Status, 1970
- 344. RIDC, Regional Industrial Development Fund, 1965-1968
- 345. RIDC, History, 1965-1966
- 346. RIDC, History, 1969
- 347. RIDC, Member Firms, nd.
- 348. RIDC, Memoranda, 1969-1970
- 349. RIDC, Memoranda, 1971
- 350. RIDC, Radio/TV spots, 1971
- 351. RIDC, Regional Award, n.d.
- 352. RIDC, Structure Proposed by Chamber of Commerce, 1966
- 353. Riot, Newsclippings on St. Louis Race Relations, 1968
- 354. Regional, Voc-Tech Council, 1972
- 355. St. Louis City, Correspondence, 1970
- 356. St. Louis Forum, Stay Single, Merge or go Public, 10/13/70
- 357. St. Louis University Proposal, 1966-1968

SEMINARS, Folders 358-360

- 358. Seminars, Government and Public Agencies, 1966
- 359. Seminars, Industrial Plant Location, 1966-1968

BOX 12 (72594)

FOLDERS 360-406

- 360. Seminars, Transportation, 1973
- 361. Skills Center Advisory Committee, 1970-1971
- 362. Small Business Administration, 1970
- 363. Small Business Administration, 1970
- 364. Special Source for RIDC, n.d.
- 365. Sophia House, 1972

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS, Folders 366-373

- 366. Speaking Engagements and Statements, 1966
- 367. Speaking Engagements and Statements, 1967
- 368. Speaking Engagements and Statements, 1968
- 369. Speaking Engagements and Statements, 1969
- 370. Speaking Engagements and Statements, 1969-1971
- 371. Speaking Engagements and Statements, 1971
- 372. Speaking Engagements, 1973
- 373. Speaking Engagements, Correspondence, 1965-1973
- 374. Staff Meeting Minutes, 1966
- 375. Status Reports, Work Sheets, 1966
- 376. Teamsters Work Stoppage, 1970
- 377. Teamwork Brochure Inquiries, 1969
- 378. Technical Grants, 1968

- 379. Telephone Connection Statistics, 1957-1968
- 380. Testimony in Support of a Second Major Airport for the Bi-State St. Louis Region by John Keydel, 1971

- 381. Transportation, 1973-1975
- 382. Transportation and Physical Distribution in the St. Louis Region, c.1970

- 383. Truck Rental, 1967-1968
- 384. Truss Feasibility Study with A.M.E. Church Extension, 1971
- 385. Union-Sarah Development Corporation, 1969
- 386. u.s. Army Corps of Engineers, c.1967
- 387. U.S. Coast Guard, 1969
- 388. U.S. Department of Commerce, 1967-1968
- 389. U.S. Office of Education, Correspondence, 1972
- 390. U.S. Postal Service in St. Louis, MO. - Reasons for Re-establishing the Regional Office, 1972

- 391. University of Missouri, 1967-1968
- 392. Urban and Regional Studies Program, 1968-1970
- 393. Urban America, Inc., 1967
- 394. Urban Institute, 1968
- 395. Urban Poverty, 1968
- 396. Urban and Regional Information Systems Associations, 1968

VENTURE CAPITAL, Folders 397-411

- 397. Applicant Evaluations, 1967
- 398. Applicant Evaluations, 1967-1970
- 399. Correspondence, 1965-1968
- 400. Credit Applications, 1967-1968
- 401. Development Credit and Research Park, 1967
- 402. Entry Development, Inc. (E.D.I.), 1966-1969
- 403. Executive Committee Minutes, nd Memoranda, 1967-1968
- 404. Financing, 1965
- 405. Financing, 1965-1967
- 406. Founding Correspondence, 1966-1967

BOX 13 (72595)

FOLDERS 407-435

- 407. Founding Correspondence, 1967-1970
- 408. General, 1967
- 409. Lists, 1967-1968
- 410. Research and Development Elsewhere, 1966
- 411. Research and Development St. Louis, 1965
- 412. Way, When and How, 1967
- 413. Vocational Team Meeting, 9/18/73, 9/19/73
- 414. Volkswagen Team Meeting, 9/73
- 415. Warehousing Firms in the St. Louis Area
- 416. Washington University, 1968-1969

WATER RESOURCES, Folders 417-420

- 417. General, 1963-1965
- 418. Water Resources Committee, Attendance Logue, 1967-1970
- 419. Water Resources Committee, Resolutions, 1967-1968
- 420. Water Resources Committee, Correspondence, 1965-1972
- 421. Work Program, 1967
- 422. Work Program Evaluation Sheets, 1972
- 423. Work Programs for Fiscal Year, 1970-1971
- 424. Work Programs for Fiscal Year, 1972
- 425. Yeatman District Corporation, 1969
- 426. Yeatman Economic Development Corp., Correspondence, 1970
- 427. Zoning Laws Speech, n.d.

RCGA ADMINISRATIVE FILES AND FINANCIAL RECORDS. Folders 428-440

- 428. Nominating Committee, 1971-1972
- 429. Financial Reports, 1972
- 430. Flow Charts, 1972
- 431. Metropolitan Directory of Speakers and Field Trip Resources, 1973
- 432. EPA Grant, 1974
- 433. Research and Development Council, 1974-1975
- 434. Membership Project, 1975
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BOX 14 (72596)

FOLDERS 436-448

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BOX 17 (72599)

FOLDERS 476-490

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INDEX

Adult Education Council, f. 301

Afro-Americans--Business, f. 123, 241, 243, 262, 263, 471, 486

Afro-Americans--Employment, f. 238-243, 479, 480

Air Pollution, f. 84

Airports, f. 39-44, 85, 155, 380, 441, 448, 469, 491

Alliance for Regional Community Health, f. 446

Alliance for Shaping Safer Community, f. 303

American Institute of Planners, St. Louis Section, f. 86

Anheuser-Busch, f. 89

Apparel, f. 471

Army Corps of Engineers, f. 167-168, 386

Auto Parts, f. 93-119, 469, 470

Beaumont Foundation, f. 208

Bi-State Regional Medical Program, f. 120-122

Building Trades, f. 126

Business, f. 1-494

Business Resource Center, f. 131-136, 471

Career Education, f. 471, 472

Census Information, f. 138-149

Central Traffic Parkway, f. 1

Centropolis or Metropolis?~ f. 150-153, 472

Chamber of Commerce, f. 5-48, 50, 352

Chemical Industry, f. 154

City Plan Commission, f. 1-4, 456, 458, 468
City Planning, f. 160
Commerce, f. 1-494
Commerce Bancshares, f. 453
Community Development, f. 157-159
Construction, f. 459, 473
Convention Center, f. 442
Curtis, Thomas B., f. 163-165
Danforth Foundation, f. 210, 445, 480
Data Processing, f. 177, 197
Defense Spending, f. 474
Des Peres River, f. 4
Development Credit Corporation, f. 490
Downtown St. Louis, Inc., f. 456
East St. Louis, f. 173, 174, 280, 337, 443
East St. Louis Housing, f. 280
East St. Louis Railroad, f. 173
East St. Louis Riverfront, f. 174
East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, f. 176-194, 458, 461-463, 475
Economic Development Agency, f. 198
Economic Growth, f. 195-199, 477
Economy, f. 1-494
Education, f. 196, 200, 301, 306, 445
Electronic University, f. 478
Ellisville, Missouri, f. 464
Employment, f. 202-204, 479, 480
Federal Spending, f. 481
Flood Elevations in St. Louis County, f. 465
Foreign Investment, f. 170-171, 481
Forest Park Community College, f. 207
Fox, John, f. 78
Freight City, f. 481
Graphic Arts Industry, f. 482
Health, f. 446, 447
Highways, f. 458
Housing, f. 277-280, 459
Human Development Corporation, f. 248
Hungate, William, f. 163 -165
Industrial Development, f. 482
Industrial Education, f. 214-227, 471
Industrial Park, f. 482
Industrial Plant Location, f. 359
Information, f. 182, 323-337, 463, 474, 483
Input/Output Study, f. 178, 186, 228-235, 330, 475, 476
Institutions, f. 484
Inter-regional Trade, f. 237
Kaskaskia International Airport, f. 469
Kaufmann, Aloys P., f. 5-13, 49

Labor, f. 110-111, 244-271, 458, 472, 485
Labor and Management Peace (LAMP), f. 485
Labor Skills Survey, f. 244-271, 458
Labor Statistics, f. 110-111, 472
Laclede's Landing, f. 45
Lambert International Airport, f. 39-44, 155, 380, 441, 448, 469
Land-Use, f. 461-463, 466
Langsdorf, A.S., f. 49
Loans, f. 486
Long, Edward, f. 163-165, 232
Manchester, Missouri, f. 464
Manpower, f. 486
Manpower Planning Council, f. 256
Manufacturing, f. 486
Mayor's Council on Youth, f. 257
Meramec Industrial Park, f. 449
Merchants and Manufacturers' Tax, f. 31
Metal Products, f. 488
Metropolitan Hospital Planning Commission, f. 447
Metropolitan Plan Association, f. 49
Metropolitan Sewer District, f. 259
Midwest Research Institute, f. 260
Mining, f. 261, 450
Mississippi River, f. 46, 451
Missouri, f. 452, 453
Missouri Advisory Council on Vocational Education, f. 266-269, 271
Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, f. 461, 463
Missouri Development Credit Corporation, f. 265
Missouri Division of Commerce and Industrial Development, f. 452, 453
Missouri-Illinois-Jefferson-Monroe Bridge Commission, f. 451
Model Cities, f. 272-276
Modular-Housing, f. 277-280, 488
Morris, Dr. Delyte, f. 77, 78
National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, f. 287
National Aeronautics and Space Administration, f. 289
National Park, East St. Louis Riverfront, f. 282
National Regional Development Program, f. 283
National Science Foundation, f. 284-286
New Town, f. 489
No-Strike Pledges, f. 293
Noise, f. 468
Northern Natural Gas, f. 294-295
Ozark Regional Commission~ f. 106-119, 489
Pake, George E., f. 76
Paper Products, f. 308
Parkway, Missouri, f. 467
Petrochemical Complex, f. 296
Population Statistics, f. 309-310

Post Vietnam Economic Conversion, f. 312, 477
Poverty, f. 395, 488
Price, Melvin, f. 162-165
Product Flow (see Input/Output Study)
Property Taxes, f. 315
Public Education, f. 490
Racial Relations, f. f. 353
Rail Facilities, f. 316-319, 490
Real Estate Assessment in St. Louis, f. 458
Refuse Disposal, f. 320
Regional Commerce and Growth Association, f. 428_440
Regional Economic Data Bank, f. 323-337, 474
Regional Growth, f. 490
Regional Industrial Development Corporation, fO 57-427, esp. 338-352, 364
Regional Planning, 1-494
Research Park, f. 490
Resources, Inc., f. 335-336
Retail Sales, f. 490
River Des Peres, f. 4
Riverfront, f. 3, 468
Robison, Frank E., f. 49
Ross, D. Reid, f. 57-427
St. Charles, f. 454
St. Louis Army Ammunition Plant, f. 455
St. Louis City, f. 1-494, esp. 456-460
St. Louis City/County Merger, f. 314, 356
St. Louis Construction Industry Joint Conference, f. 459
St. Louis County, f. 464-467
St. Louis County Municipal League, f. 465
St. Louis County Municipalities, f. 465
St. Louis County Noise Control Code, f. 468
St. Louis County Planning Commission, f. 465-468
St. Louis Metropolitan Area Airport Authority, f. 441
St. Louis Post Dispatch, f. 311
St. Louis Research Council, f. 50-56
St. Louis University, f. 457
Shatts, W. Phillip, f. 49
Small Business Administration, f. 362-363
Sophia House, f. 365
Southern Illinois Metropolitan Area Planning Commission, f. 444
Southern Illinois University, f. 444, 459
Spirit of St. Louis Project, f. 440
Student Labor, f. 254
Sullivan, Leonor K., f. 163-166
Symington, James, f. 166
Symington, Stuart, f. 49, 162-166
Teamsters Work Stoppage, f. 376
Telephone Connection Statistics, f. 379

Trans Pacific Airline Route, f. 33-37
Transportation, f. 47-48, 190-194, 360, 381, 382, 460, 491
Union-Sarah Economic Development Corporation, f. 385
U.S. Chamber of Commerce, f. 38
U.S. Coast Guard, f. 387
U.S. Department of Commerce, f. 388
U.S. Office of Education, f. 389
U.S. Postal Service in St. Louis, f. 390
Urban and Regional Information Systems, f. 396
Urban and Regional Studies Program, f. 392
Urban Decay, f. 460
Urban Information System, f. 323-337
Urban Institute, f. 394, 456
Urban Programs Institute, f. 492
Veeder, Nicholas P., f. 76
Venture Capital, f. 397-412, 492
Vietnam, f. 312, 477
Vocational Education, f. 266-269, 287, 305, 354, 413, 492, 493
Warehousing, f. 415, 494
Washington University, f. 416, 441, 458, 460
Water Resources, f. 417-420
Weir, W. Victor, f. 49
Williams, Mayor James E., f. 444
Winchester, Missouri, f. 464
Work Program, f. 421-424
Yeatman District Corporation, f. 425
Yeatman Economic Development Corporation, f. 426
Young, Howard L, f. 76, 77
Zoning Laws, f. 427