

North Star

Zero racial disparities in infant mortality by 2033.

Zip Codes Served



This project served participants in the following FLOURISH priority zip codes:

63104, 63106, 63107, 63111, 63112, 63113, 63115, 63118, 63120, 63121, 63133, 63135, 63136, 63140, 63144, 63147

How much did we do?



95

Black Families served



51

Estate plans established



57

Titles cleared



4


Community events hosted

Program Description

This FLOURISH grant funded the Family Property Project at Legal Services of Eastern Missouri's Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative. The purpose of this grant was use estate planning and title clearance legal services to increase safe and stable homeownership for Black families, thereby facilitating better health outcomes for Black mothers and their children. This project took place from April 2021 to December 2022.

Priority Areas

FLOURISH Community Leaders Cabinet identified priority areas they believe will have the most significant impact on improving conditions for Black families. Infant mortality is a complex issue that can't be solved by one organization alone. Below, you will find population level data where FLOURISH is contributing to changes for Black families alongside other organizations. Legal Services of Eastern Missouri is working to move the needle for the individuals they serve in the areas listed below.

FLOURISH Priority Area	Category of Work	Population Level Data
 Social Determinants of Health	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeownership • Property Tax Assistance • Foreclosure Prevention • Housing Repair & Safety • Protection of Home Equity

FLOURISH uses a **results-based accountability** model of evaluation, because it helps show how collaborative efforts can make an impact on reducing disparities in infant mortality. We focus on how well programs address root causes of the issue and whether Black pregnant and parenting families are better off.

How well did we do it?

How were Black pregnant and parenting families impacted by this project?

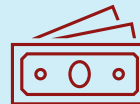


3x

as many families served as anticipated.

Is anyone better off?

What change occurred as a result of this project?



\$4.9M

estimated amount of wealth preserved based on appraised value of client homes.

Spotlight Story

DOM lives next door to the family home where she and her twelve siblings grew up. Her father passed away in 2001, and her mother passed away in 2019, leaving over 200 living descendants upon her death. The family home caught fire in 2016, and the city started citing it for building code violations. Eventually, DOM ended up in housing court, where the judge informed her that there was little she could do while the house was still titled in her parents' names. The judge referred her to the Neighborhood Vacancy Initiative (NVI), and staff attorneys began working to update title to the home. In the process, we learned that DOM's sister is also living in a home still titled in her late parents' names. This case then became a family project. We worked with DOM and her sister to establish a complete family tree and determine all heirs with a legal interest in the property. Then, we worked with the heirs to transfer their interest to DOM. DOM hopes to fix up the fire damaged home and keep it in the family for generations to come.



DOM story embodies the purpose of the Family Property Project. When their parents bought their first home in St. Louis in 1959, Black homeownership was still sharply restricted. Racially restrictive covenants had been outlawed only ten years before. It would be another ten years more before redlining was made illegal by the Fair Housing Act. Still, their parents managed to build wealth for their family through property ownership, which they then passed to their children. Lack of access to legal services, however, meant that those intergenerational transfers were all informal. DOM experienced barriers to fixing up the family home because she lacked a clear title. NVI is helping both sisters clear titles to the properties they inherited from their parents. Once title is cleared, NVI will draft beneficiary deeds to pass those properties cleanly and safely to the next generation when DOM and VOC are gone, protecting multiple generations of Black property ownership and wealth.



What's Next

The Family Property Project, established using the Flourish grant, has shown the immense need for title clearing and estate planning legal assistance for low-income homeowners, particularly in historically marginalized communities. NVI has been able to meet much more of that need than initially projected, nearly tripling our client service goal. Still, the overwhelming demand presented a challenge for the program, which we overcame by creating better systems and increasing staffing.

Heirs' property and estate planning issues do not often receive much public attention due to their complexity. As a result, there are few funding opportunities for providers to serve clients in need. Increasing visibility around heirs' property issues, and the need for preventative estate planning measures, can help to raise awareness for both clients and potential program funders.

FLOURISH St. Louis, an infant mortality reduction initiative powered by Generate Health, is bringing together people and organizations across the region to fix the systems that impact the health of Black families. This organization received a FLOURISH grant which was funded by Missouri Foundation for Health.