How would you map the monuments of St. Louis?

Monument Lab researchers gathered 750 hand-drawn maps from St. Louis residents and visitors responding to our guiding question. This map is an interpretation and reflection on those we collected. Like all maps and monuments, this artifact is impermanent and incomplete.

141 zipcodes where mapmakers live

285 mapmakers answered "how do you identify?"

1044 unique places mapped

These 40 places were featured on more than 14 maps (ordered by frequency)

WENTZVILLE
WELDON SPRING
MERAMEC
ST. PETERS
HARVESTER

Legend

14 of More Names
Out of 750 individual maps, these locations were marked on at least 14 by mapmakers

Established With Recognition
These locations are places that are marked and open, and are formally recognized as historically significant sites

Established Without Recognition
These locations are places that are marked and open, but aren't formally recognized as a monument or commemorative site

Cross-Referenced
These sites are physically gone, but not forgotten—participants would like to see their memory preserved or reinstated

Proposed/Inspired With Sites
These are locations proposed for additional or commercial status, or for inclusion on a new monument or site

Proposed/Inspired Without Sites
These are locations proposed for new monuments that do not have a specific existing or associated site

Personal Memories
These locations are some of the many sites listed as personally significant to participants

Back St. Louis
Locations indicated in yellow are sites specifically voted the moniker "Back St. Louis" in the description of their maps

16 maps cite Mill Creek Valley, a nearly-200-year-old African-American community of 20,000 people, 5,500 homes, and vulnerability of the St. Louis mapmakers. I am humbled by the rich history of the city. The small Chinatown was the city's original Chinese immigrant community. The Gateway Arch was the most cited monument in the collected maps; however, more than half of the mapmakers did not include it in their map of the city.

14 maps included the remains of the former Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex, which opened in 1955 and was fully occupied by 1972. The project spurred reverberations across the region. The 33-acre site was razed in 1977 for what was then known as "slum clearance." This complex is one of the most contentious aspects of the city's official history, and it remains a lightning rod for discussions of race, class, and power. Despite the loss of Pruitt-Igoe, it has inspired many new aspirations. Monument Lab asked mapmakers to think about the potential sites for new monuments and asked them to include the remains of the former Pruitt-Igoe public housing complex. Eighteen mapmakers included it, which is unusual for a creation of a new site for new monuments.

16 maps included the Cahokia Mounds, the remains of the once thriving Mississippian metropolis of Cahokia, the largest settlement north of Mexico pre-Columbus. This Monument Lab map of St. Louis presents an amalgam of existing with recognition, existing without recognition, personal memories, and networked sites. It is a call for greater recognition of the city's history and its potential as a site for a new monument in the future. The creation and destruction of monuments, cultural sites, and places of memory underscore how visual culture facilitates narratives of power, not walls.

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Kristin Giannantonio, William Hodgson, and Allison Nkwocha

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