


# Locked Out/Locked In

Apartment 1 Bed 1 Bath 600 ft<sup>2</sup> \$695/mo



See full address, Saint Louis, MO 63104

**NO SECTION 8** **AFFORDABLE**

This property does not participate in Section 8 program and does not require a Section 8 voucher. Landlord or management company has chosen not to participate in Section 8 HUD program at this time.

## Section 8 Discrimination in St. Louis City

*An investigation by EHOc found over 100 different advertisements for rental properties in the City of St. Louis that place clear restrictions on the availability of the housing based solely on whether or not the renter uses a Section 8 housing choice voucher. This clearly violates the source of income discrimination protection provided in City of St. Louis Ordinance #69953.*

### **Background**

Under the City of St. Louis's local fair housing law, it is illegal to discriminate in housing and housing related transactions on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, familial status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and source of income, which includes Housing Choice Vouchers (also known as Section 8 vouchers). The City of St. Louis passed an ordinance (#69953) in February 2015 explicitly protecting Section 8 recipients from discrimination in housing under the Source of Income ("SOI") protection in an attempt to curb the accumulation of voucher recipients in low income areas (the "Ordinance").<sup>1</sup> Discriminatory advertising is also prohibited by

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<sup>1</sup> Moskop, Walker. (Feb 26, 2015) "St. Louis Passes Bills to Reduce Section 8 Concentration in Poor Neighborhoods." *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Retrieved from [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/st-louis-passes-bills-to-reduce-section-concentration-in-poor/article\\_7a9d03ec-21f0-57b4-9032-9206b7076dc0.html](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/st-louis-passes-bills-to-reduce-section-concentration-in-poor/article_7a9d03ec-21f0-57b4-9032-9206b7076dc0.html)

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the law, making it illegal to make, print or publish an advertisement that shows a preference, or discriminates against any of the protected classes, including Section 8 vouchers.<sup>2</sup>

The City of St. Louis's ordinance joins 11 states, including Washington, D.C., and over 50 cities and counties with similar source of income protections.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, bipartisan legislation known as the "Fair Housing Improvement Act of 2018" was introduced in the U.S. Senate on November 13, 2018 to make Source of Income a federally protected class under the Fair Housing Act.<sup>4</sup> While this ordinance might be new in the City of St. Louis, this kind of Fair Housing protection is increasingly more common and getting closer to becoming federal law in the future.

## Findings

Over a six-week period of time, EHOC found more than 100 different discriminatory advertisements on numerous listing sites such as HotPads, Zillow, Craigslist, WeTakeSection8, and others. These advertisements list a property in the City of St. Louis and the description in the advertisement makes it clear that participants in the Section 8 program are not welcome. The phrases used include, but are not limited to, "No Section 8" or "Not Section 8 Approved."

The advertisements found in this investigation clearly discriminate on the basis of source of income and Section 8 vouchers<sup>5</sup>

EHOC's investigation revealed many housing providers and listing agents that were repeat offenders, running multiple ads explicitly saying "No Section 8" or that properties did not accept Section 8. Of these repeat offenders, Reconnect Real Estate was the worst. This investigation found 13 advertisements from Reconnect Real Estate that said Section 8 vouchers were not accepted at these properties.

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<sup>2</sup> Ordinance 67119, Section 9, (C)(1)(f).

<sup>3</sup> Bell, A., Sard, B., and Koepnick, B. "Prohibiting Discrimination Against Renters Using Housing Vouchers Improves Results." Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. December 20, 2018. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/prohibiting-discrimination-against-renters-using-housing-vouchers-improves-results>

<sup>4</sup> National Low Income Housing Coalition. "Bipartisan Fair Housing Improvement Act Would Prohibit Discrimination Based on Source of Income and Veteran Status." Nov. 19, 2018. <https://nlihc.org/article/bipartisan-fair-housing-improvement-act-would-prohibit-discrimination-based-source-income>

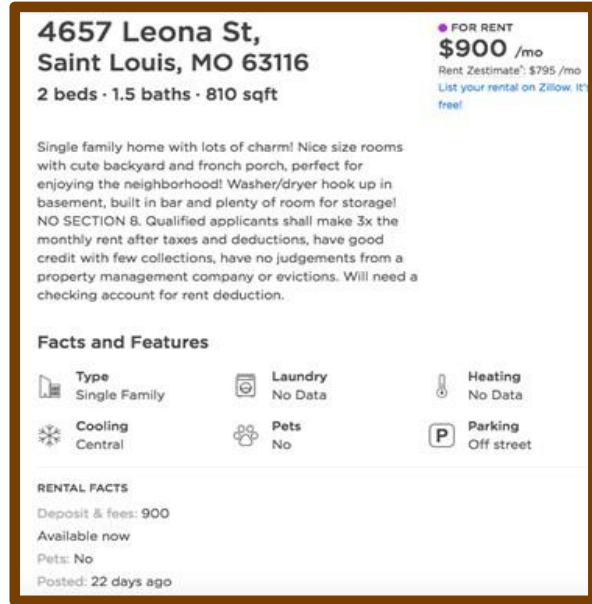
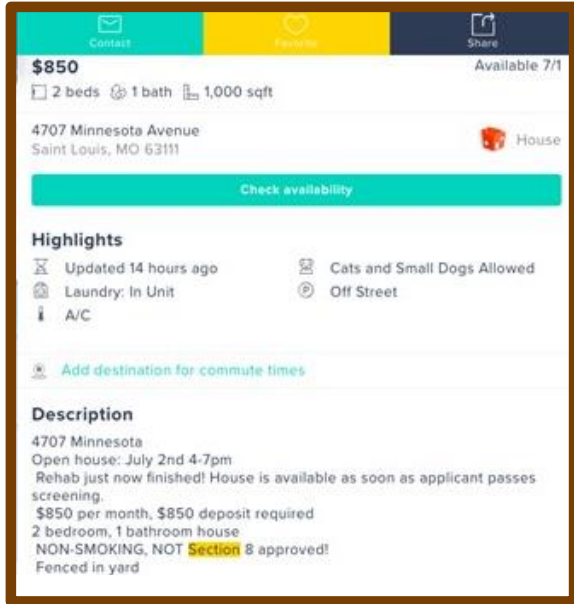
<sup>5</sup> See City of St. Louis Ordinance no. 67119, available at <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/internal-apps/legislative/upload/Ordinances/BOAPdf/67119x00.pdf>

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Over 100 different facially discriminatory ads were found across the City of St. Louis. The discriminatory ads EHOC found during its investigation were largely concentrated in South City neighborhoods, with 16 ads in Dutchtown and 15 ads in Tower Grove South, as seen in the table below. The map below identifies each of the explicitly discriminatory advertisements that were found by EHOC. Each green point on the map represents a single advertisement that blatantly violates the city’s fair housing law.

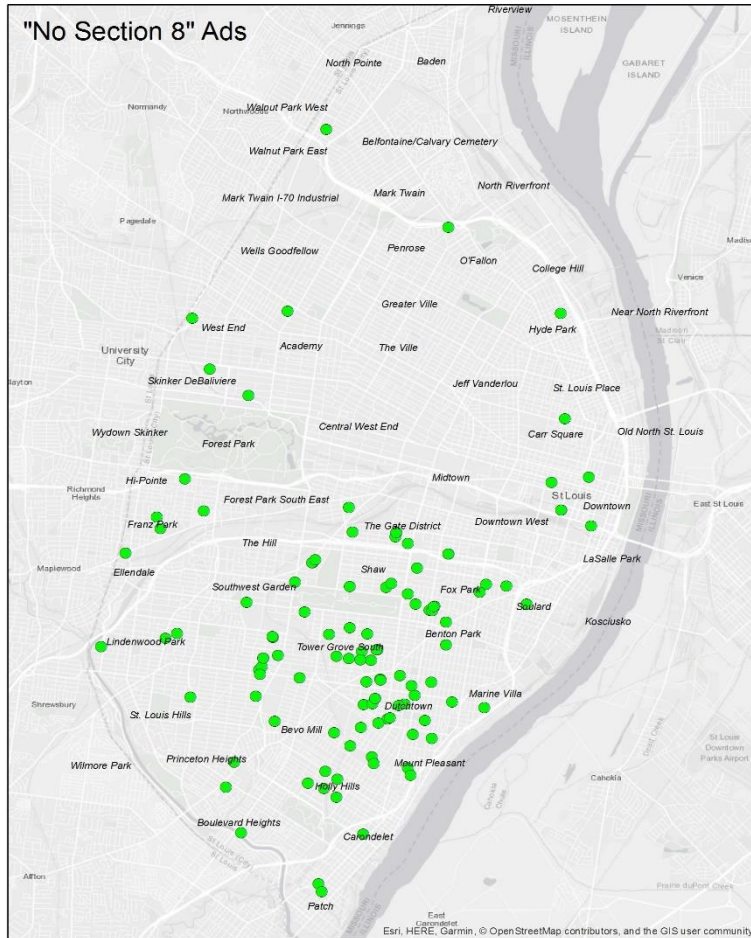
Discriminatory advertisements like the ones found here deny the low-income families with vouchers even the chance to look at these apartments. These advertisements expressly restrict where individuals and families with vouchers can live, which can subsequently limit their access to high opportunity neighborhoods that may provide better educational opportunities, healthcare (EMS services), nutrition, self-care, safety, among countless other resources. In redeveloping neighborhoods like Tower Grove South, the prevalence of No Section 8 ads are keeping low-income families locked out.

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Neighborhood	Ad Count
Dutchtown	16
Tower Grove South	15
North Hampton	7
Tower Grove East	7
Holly Hills	5
Southwest Garden	5
Tiffany	4
Mount Pleasant	4
Downtown West	3
Gravois Park	3
Lindenwood Park	3
Shaw	3
Franz Park	2
Clayton-Tamm	2
Patch	2
Boulevard Heights	2
Bevo Mill	2
South Hampton	2
McKinley Heights	2
The Gate District	2
Downtown	2
Botanical Heights	1
Forest Park South East	1

The real life consequences of source of income discrimination have been thoroughly examined by many. The *We Live Here* podcast by St. Louis Public Radio<sup>6</sup> and *The New York Times*<sup>7</sup> each did comprehensive stories documenting how hard it can be for a family with a Section 8 voucher to find quality housing in St. Louis and across the country.

<sup>6</sup> “Sectioned Off: Subsidized, Low-Income Housing in America.” (June 12, 2016) *We Live Here Podcast*, Retrieved from <http://www.welivehere.show/posts/2016/6/8/sectioned-off-subsidized-low-income-housing-in-america>

<sup>7</sup> Elgion, J. (Aug 8, 2015). A Year After Ferguson, Housing Segregation Defies Tools to Erase It. *The New York Times*, Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/09/us/a-year-after-ferguson-housing-segregation-defies-tools-to-erase-it.html>

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There is also underlying racial discrimination with housing providers flatly refusing to accept Section 8 vouchers. According to HUD data, 94% of Section 8 voucher recipients in the City of St. Louis identify as Black or African American.<sup>8</sup> A refusal to accept Section 8 vouchers means African Americans are disproportionately turned away from these housing providers. This creates other fair housing issues in that a No Section 8 advertisement could be a pretext for racial discrimination.

Early research shows promise for SOI antidiscrimination laws like the one adopted by the City of St. Louis both increasing the likelihood of Section 8 voucher recipients finding a place to live and moving to a higher-opportunity neighborhood.<sup>9</sup>

Apartment Studio 1 Bath 344ft<sup>2</sup> \$510/mo

See full address, Saint Louis, MO 63111

**NO SECTION 8 AFFORDABLE**

This property does not participate in Section 8 program and does not require a Section 8 voucher. Landlord or management company has chosen not to participate in Section 8 HUD program at this time.

**Welcome to Chapel Apartments**  
 Enjoy our neighborhood and comfortable apartments. Professionally managed, we've got all your needs covered. Cats allowed, Small dogs allowed. Close to dining and shops, bright, gas stove, trash included.

## Enforcement

In the City of St. Louis, the agency tasked with enforcing this ordinance is the Civil Rights Enforcement Agency (CREA). CREA's role in protecting residents of the city from source of income discrimination, per the language of the ordinance, is to investigate reports of source of income discrimination and decide whether or not there is cause to believe that there is discrimination and subsequently bring cases with cause to the City Counselor's office.<sup>10</sup> The role of the City Counselor is to take these cases investigated by CREA and prosecute the offenders. The City of St. Louis may fine the culpable party up to \$500 for each violation.<sup>11</sup>

## Call to Action

<sup>8</sup> HUD. (2017) A Picture of Subsidized Households. Retrieved from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/assths.html>

<sup>9</sup> Tighe, J., Hatch, M. E., & Mead, J. (2017). Source of Income Discrimination and Fair Housing Policy. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 3-15.

<sup>10</sup> City of St. Louis Ordinance no. 67119.

<sup>11</sup> Id.

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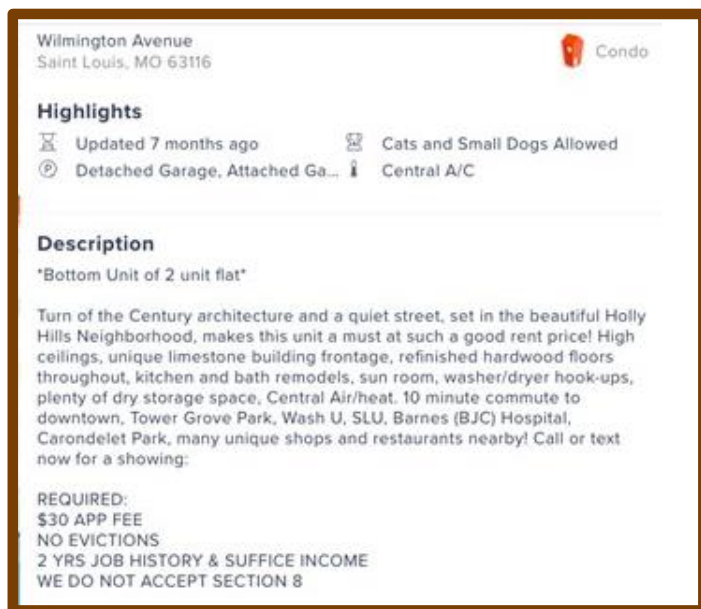
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This investigation only scratches the surface of rampant discrimination against voucher recipients in the City of St. Louis. EHOC collected over 100 discriminatory ads over a six-week period of time. We know that there are more ads placed every day.

We call on the City of St. Louis to uphold and enforce the laws on the books to protect its citizens against source of income discrimination as the Board of Alderman and the Mayor intended when they passed Ordinance 67119.

We ask that the Mayor's Office immediately launch an extensive public awareness campaign on source of income discrimination and its subsequent harms. We also ask that CREA and the City Counselor's office designate a point of contact to accept, investigate and prosecute housing providers for source of income discrimination.



We understand the limitations of CREA due to the impact of SB43 and losing substantial equivalency to the federal Fair Housing Act because of the state legislature. We recognize the financial limitations in investigating source of income cases, particularly when there is a maximum limit of \$500 on fines. Thus, we also call on the City of St. Louis to increase CREA's resources and capacity so that the agency can serve its intended purpose and mission to monitor and investigate fair housing, equal employment and public accommodation complaints.

## Conclusion

Decades of federally-mandated discriminatory housing policy created the very segregated communities that we continue to live in today. In order to counteract this history, we need bold housing policy if we as a society truly intend to imbue the principles of equality that we have committed to on paper with real life. We applaud the City of St. Louis for taking the courageous first step of adopting SOI antidiscrimination legislation within its borders, and now we call on the City to take decisive action to enforce the law.

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