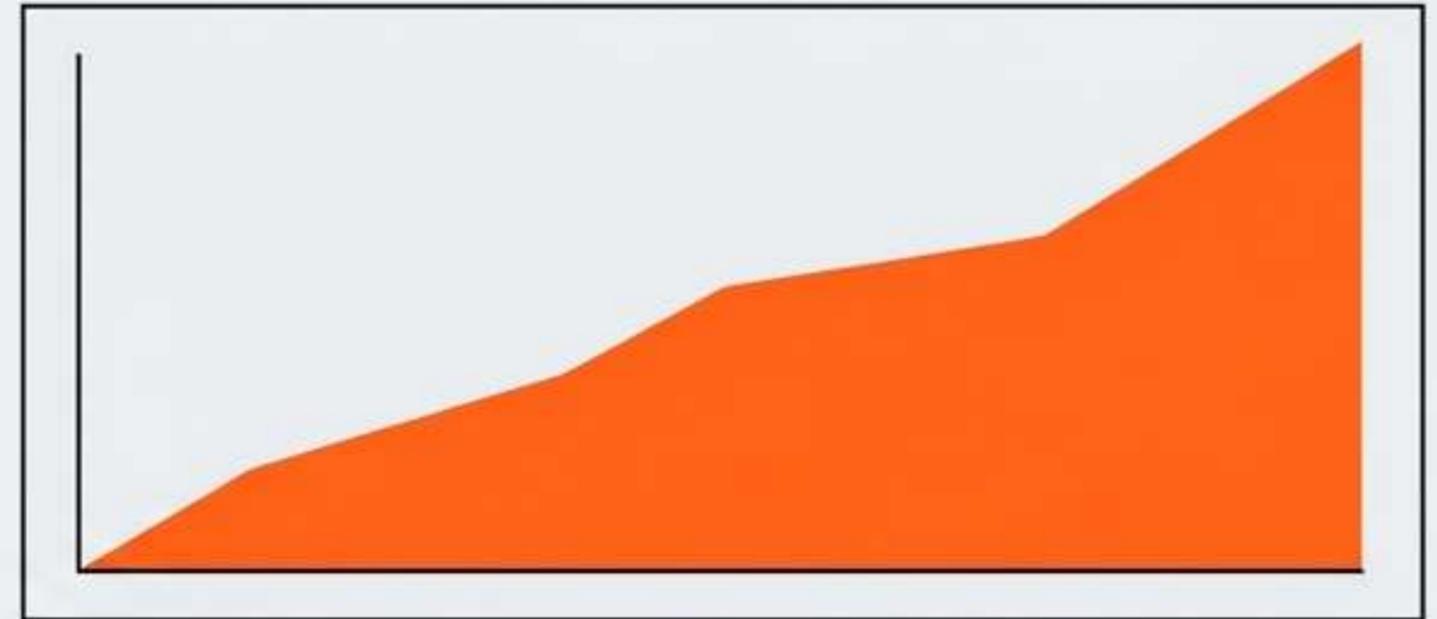


THE DECOUPLING EFFECT: ST. LOUIS AS AN ECONOMIC OUTLIER



General STL Economy: 0.0% Growth
(Stagnation)



STL Construction (NAICS 2362):
+3.5% Growth (Aggressive Expansion)

KEY INSIGHTS

- **THE PARADOX:** High project demand (NGA, BJC) meets a structural labor deficit (Silver Tsunami).
- **THE COST:** Salaries for PMs and PEs have spiked 25%+; the AI Premium drives wages higher.
- **THE PIVOT:** Success in 2026 requires shifting from Hero Work to the 3Rs framework: Recruit, Retain, Risk Management.

THE GREAT REALIGNMENT: STRUCTURAL SCARCITY

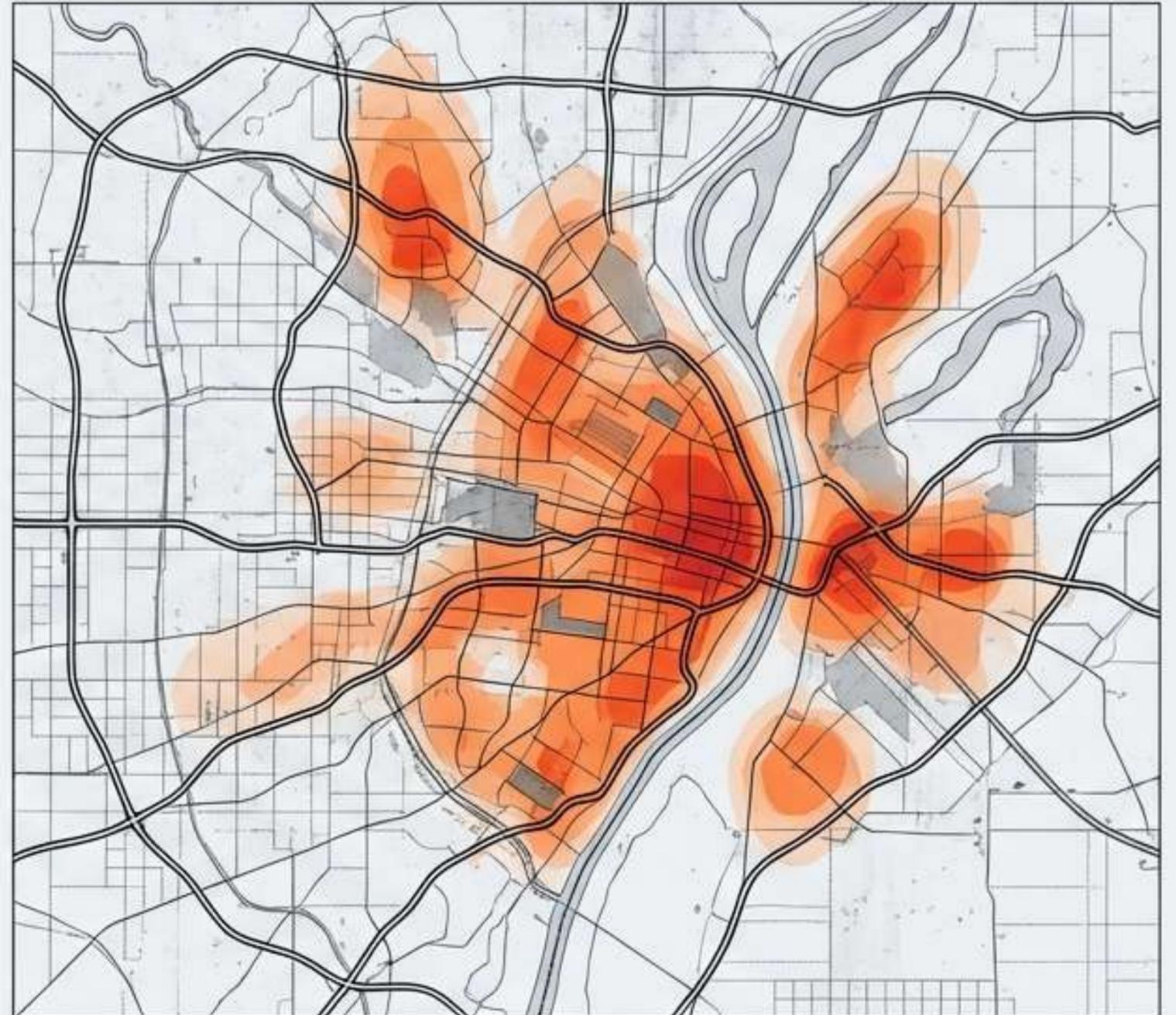
We are not in a growth cycle; we are in a replacement crisis.



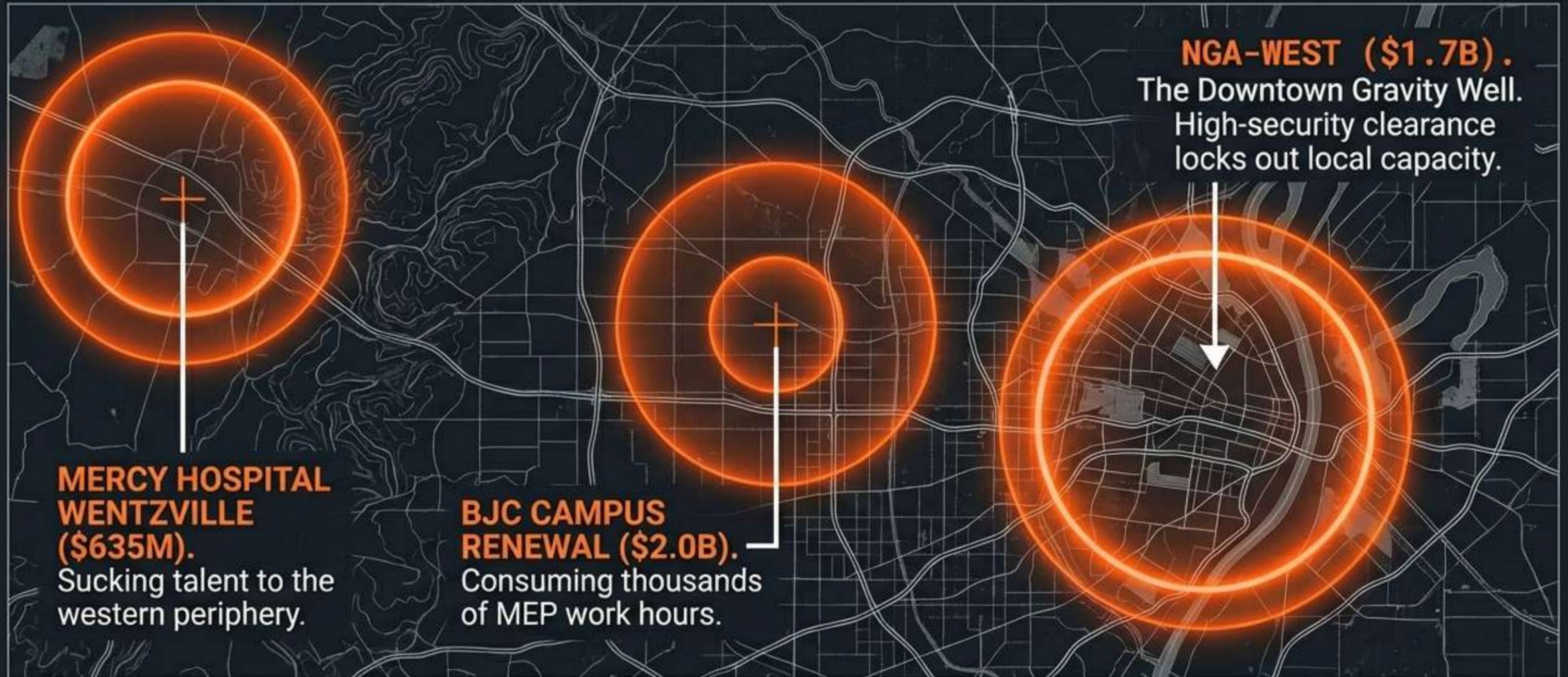
THE ST. LOUIS ANOMALY: A BUILD-HEAVY GRAVITY WELL

- STL ENGINEERING (NAICS 54133):
+0.5% Growth
- NONRESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION:
+3.5% Growth
- JOB OPENINGS (LOCAL):
8,200
- NET NEW WORKER REQUIREMENT:
~4,200 Annually

Insight: The region requires an Expansion Rate to support 2-3% growth in healthcare and data centers, creating a gravity well for talent.

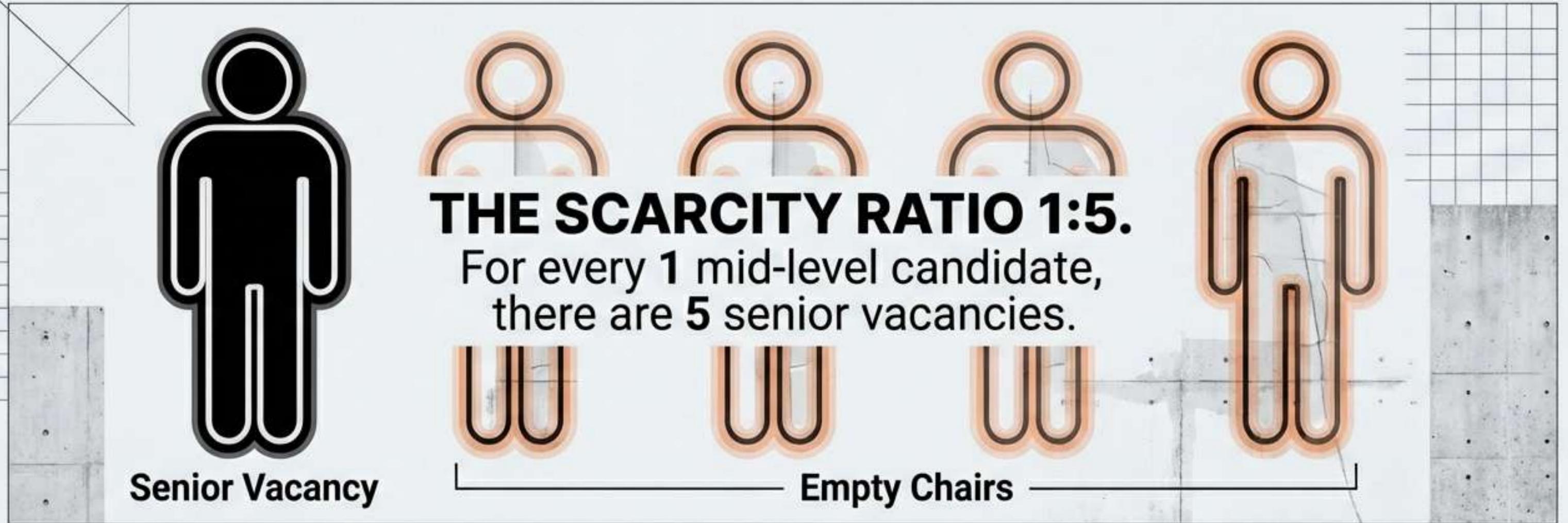


THE TITAN PROJECTS: MARKET DISTORTERS



IMPACT: Small/Mid firms face Crowding Out and Strategic Inaction.

THE MISSING MIDDLE & THE ENROLLMENT CLIFF



↓ Enrollment: -2.4%
(Undergraduate)

— Birthrates: Below
Replacement Level

↓ Employee Tenure:
4.9 Years (Down 30%)

The **Lost Generation** (8-12 year experience bracket) is the industry's greatest vulnerability.

SALARY VELOCITY: THE NEW GROWTH LEADERS (2021-2026)

PROJECT ENGINEER (PE) | +56.7% (Licensure Premium)

MEP DESIGNER | +48.4%

BIM MANAGER | +43.4%

PROJECT ARCHITECT | +32.4%

STL BENCHMARK:

Mid-level Construction PM averages **\$116,002**
(27% above national average).

Job Hugging creates wage spikes.

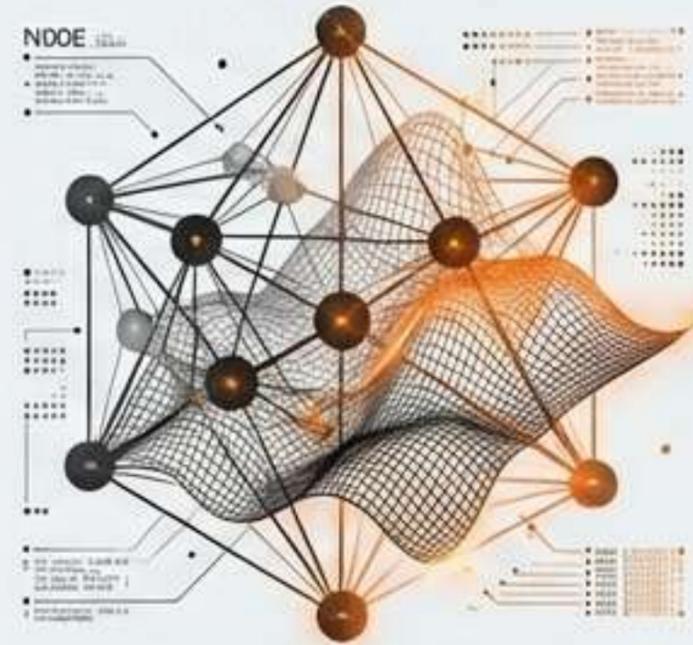
THE AI & VDC PREMIUM: THE NEW WAGE DIFFERENTIATOR



Traditional Architect

\$65k - \$120k

30-50%
Salary Delta



Computational Designer

\$140k Avg (Top \$178k)

Strategy: Firms must pay this premium to offset headcount shortages with algorithmic efficiency (Python/Grasshopper).

REAL WAGE ANALYSIS: THE ST. LOUIS ADVANTAGE VS. RISK

$$\text{Real Wage}_{STL} = \frac{\text{Nominal Salary}}{\text{COL Index}_{STL}/100}$$

ST. LOUIS DATA

ST. LOUIS COST OF LIVING: 89.0
(11% below national)

HOUSING COST: 23% below national

COMPARATIVE VALUE

THE ARBITRAGE: **\$100k** in STL =
\$128,400 in Chicago/Denver.

! THE THREAT: Geographic Arbitrage. Coastal firms hiring STL talent remotely forces local wage floors up 12-15%.

THE END OF HERO WORK

Why people are really leaving.



Frontline Worker
Burnout



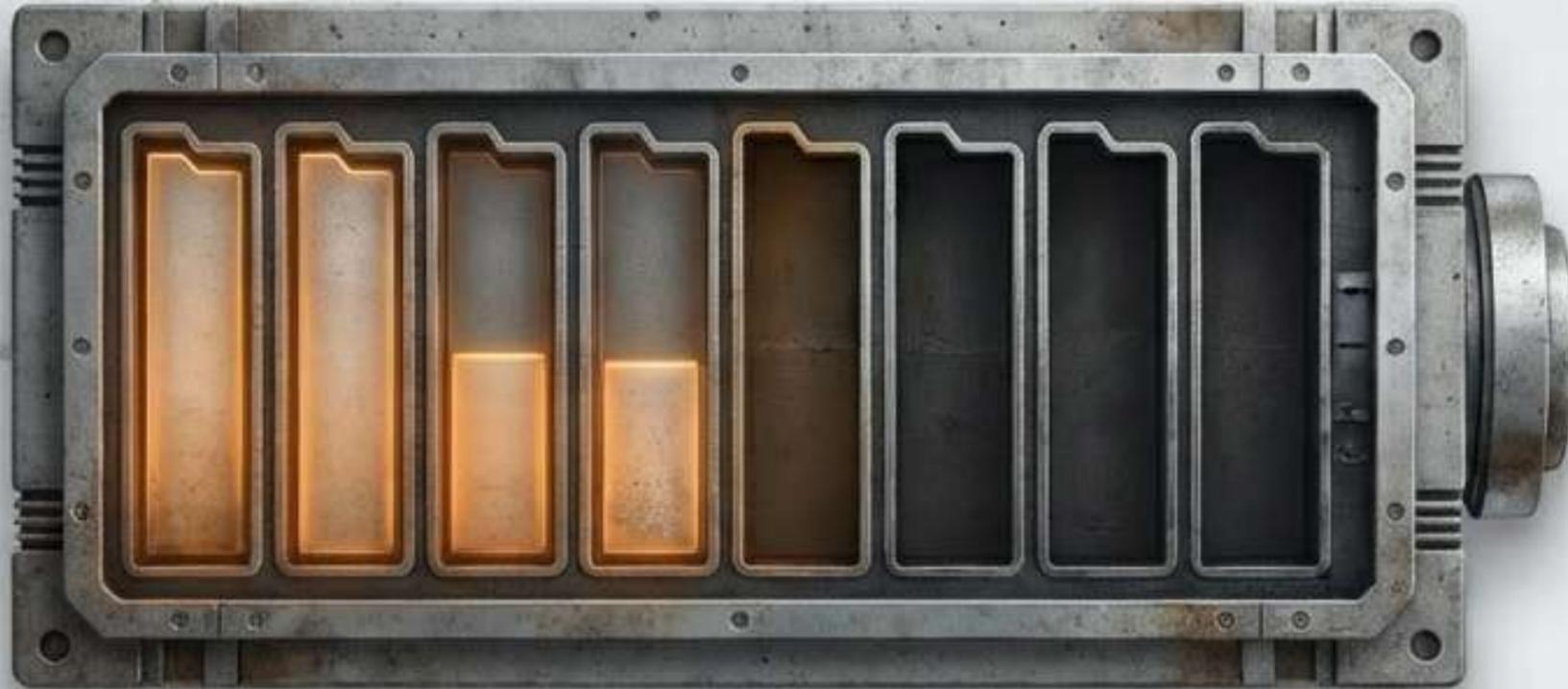
Architect Burnout
(High-Pressure Roles)



Higher Stroke Risk
(55+ Hour Weeks)

Turnover is driven by the rejection of romanticized long hours. Talent now demands Schedule Empowerment and efficient workflows over last-minute rescues.

THE AI PARADOX & QUIET BURNOUT



The Paradox: AI lets us double your workload rather than freeing up time.

- **Quiet Burnout:** Logging off at 5:00 PM sharp; emotional detachment.
- **Friction:** 64% of architects cite administrative friction and version control as burnout drivers.

! Bottom Line: AI must be sold as Workload Redesign, not output maximization.

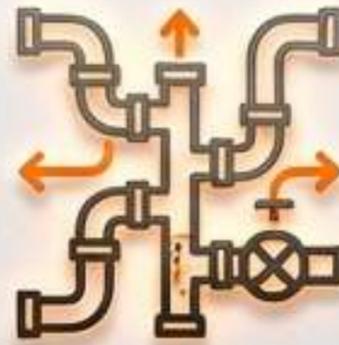
STRATEGY R1: RECRUIT (THE AVAILABILITY PIVOT)

SPEED.



Streamline interviews.
Remove bureaucracy.
Roboto Mono

PIPELINES.



Target non-traditional
candidates and
Returnships.
Roboto Mono

THE STL PITCH.



Market the Real Wage
arbitrage. Pitch 23%
housing savings to pull
talent from coasts.

Goal: Reacting to shrinking labor pools with **speed and narrative control.**

STRATEGY R2: **RETAIN** (THE STABILITY PIVOT)



Key Stat: **29%** of firms are increasing bonuses to break **Job Hugging** trends.

! Bottom Line: Retention isn't about perks; it's about redesigning the work itself for stability.

STRATEGY R3: **RISK MANAGEMENT** (THE CONTINUITY PIVOT)

Silver Tsunami
(Retiring Experts)



Formal Mentorship &
Knowledge Capture



Fractional Roles:
Gig talent for niche
skills (BIM, Cyber)
to plug gaps.



Resilience: Upskill junior staff in AI to bridge productivity gaps.

THE NEW EQUILIBRIUM: TALENT IS STRATEGY

1

FORMALIZE THE AI PREMIUM.

Pay for computational skills to offset headcount.

2

LEVERAGE LOCAL ADVANTAGE. Use STL Cost-of-Living as a primary weapon against coastal arbitrage.

3

END HERO WORK.

Move to Systemic Efficiency to stop the burnout bleeding.

Workforce strategy is no longer HR strategy—it is Business Strategy.



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