

A photograph of a woman with dark curly hair, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and tan pants, reaching for a piece of produce in a grocery store aisle. The shelves are stocked with various fruits and vegetables, including apples, pears, and leafy greens. The image is partially covered by a dark blue overlay on the right side.

EMPOWERING *Neighborhoods* TO THRIVE



FCS

focused
COMMUNITY
strategies

2015 Annual Report



LETTER *from the* PRESIDENT

I said to my wife, "Did you see the marketing for the cooking demonstration coming to Carver Market?" Jolyn, being a Food Network junkie, looked at the marketing materials I handed her with surprise and said excitedly, "When?!" I started to respond and she blurted out, "How did FCS swing this?"

The assumption, of course, was the event seemed a little bigger than normal for us. She was right.

One of our key partners on our Carver Neighborhood Market project used their connections to bring in Chef G. Garvin for a cooking demonstration. Our little neighborhood had the opportunity to host and hobnob with a talented and famous chef. Our neighbors took pictures, tasted good food, watched cooking demos, and fellowshiped with each other in the aisles of our little store!

I wish you could have seen the diversity of the crowd that attended this event. It was a little slice of heaven!

I have been overwhelmed, since taking the reins of FCS two years ago, by the steadfast commitment of our donors to take projects like Carver Market and give them life. Your generosity has enabled FCS to pursue our work of neighborhood transformation in a way that combines strong faith with transformative investment. It takes great tenacity and endurance to re-neighbor

a community in a way that preserves justice for the poor and encourages an inclusive, sustainable economy where all can thrive.

2015 included two initiatives that are ground-breaking for FCS. First is a restorative housing program that is transforming blocks of blighted and vacant housing into homeownership. The second is a small grocery store, Carver Neighborhood Market, which changed a food desert into a food oasis. If you have not visited our neighborhood to get a look at this work, we would love to host you for coffee and a brief tour. It would take 30 minutes of your time, and you will leave encouraged by the impact of your support. Thank you for your investment in these initiatives!

The FCS mission statement describes our development as innovative and holistic. We are committed to finding innovative solutions to poverty and holistic answers

that rebuild the fabric of the entire neighborhood. In 2016, we will launch a new endeavor to help us assess the impact of our work. The Flourishing Neighborhood Index is an assessment tool that we are developing so we can help other community organizations and neighborhoods apply our model and improve the work in their own contexts.

Finally, this summer we will launch the Lupton Center to share our message of responsible charity and community development. We are already working on a web-based curriculum to put our learning on smart charity in the hands of multiple churches and mission organizations. Of course, we are hopeful of your continued participation as we build neighborhoods where families flourish and God's Shalom is present!

Sincerely,

Jim Wehner

President

A MESSAGE from the **BOARD CHAIR** | *Ben Teague*



What a year 2015 has been for Focused Community

Strategies! Coming on the heels of a successful leadership transition and board strategic planning in 2014, FCS embarked on the implementation of a host of initiatives that further our vision of partnering with the neighborhood of South Atlanta to "create a flourishing community where God's Shalom is present."

Under Jim's leadership, we have remained focused on the values that make FCS a thought-leader in the area of Christian Community Development: Dignity, Empowerment, Neighboring. These are the common threads that link the myriad of ways in which we are engaging South Atlanta in the areas of housing, economic development, and neighborhood engagement.

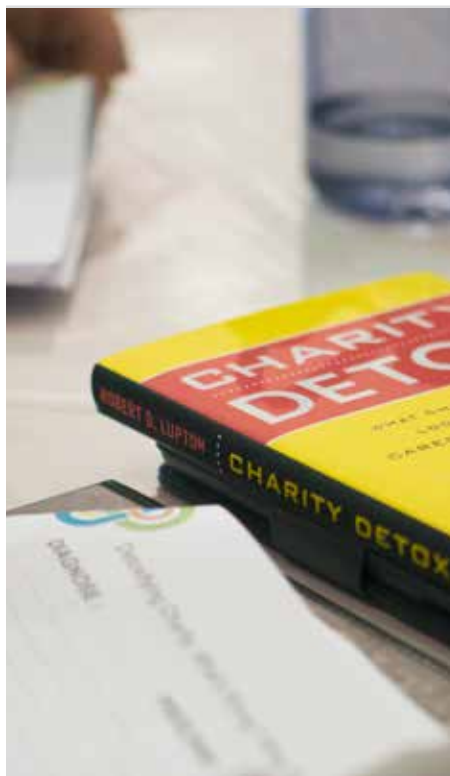
For me, the attraction to the work of FCS is that they find innovative and holistic ways to engage an entire neighborhood. To recognize the dignity in all people and work alongside them to "seek the peace of the city."

I am encouraged by the hard work of our board in 2015 to become a more mission-driven organization as we grow and am so excited for the work ahead in 2016. Our biggest initiative ahead of us, driven by the stellar demand for the quarterly Open House events, is the formation of the Lupton Center. We believe this is a way to steward the influence we have been given over the years and expand the message of doing charity in a non-toxic way.

Ben Teague | *Board Chair*

THE WORK *of* TRANSFORMATION

Focused Community Strategies has been transforming under-resourced neighborhoods in Atlanta for nearly four decades. Continuing a heritage of learning and adapting, FCS recently restructured and refocused its organization, further expanding its reach into distressed urban communities. As FCS continues to build on this foundation, unprecedented transformation is taking hold. Where chaos and brokenness once reigned, stable neighborhoods are emerging in which families are flourishing and God's shalom is dwelling.



The work of FCS rests on four pillars:



MIXED-INCOME HOUSING

Realizing a strategy conceived by Dr. Bob Lupton as "gentrification with justice," FCS secures affordable housing for low-income residents, who are then protected from being priced out as their neighborhoods are revitalized. In this way, each neighbor benefits from the revitalization, instead of being pushed away.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Believing that commerce drives the creation of healthy neighborhoods, FCS brings small business and partners to the neighborhood that help to provide jobs, spur the local economy toward growth, and increase access to resources for all of our neighbors.

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GOD'S SHALOM IS DWELLING.

NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

Closely aligned with the local leadership, FCS engages underserved communities by offering intentional neighboring initiatives, youth activities, and resident programs that create a sense of neighborhood connectivity.

TRAINING & CONSULTING

Each year, over 250 community development practitioners from around the country receive training from FCS. Currently crafting a learning center for community transformation, FCS is expanding its educational platform by inspiring like-minded organizations to apply best practices in their own communities.

These pillars model FCS' core values; the **DIGNITY** and significance of every person, the **EMPOWERMENT** of others to do for themselves, and the intentional **NEIGHBORING** that creates community among diverse residents.

HOUSING

Mixed-income housing is the foundation upon which a vibrant community may be built. For decades, Historic South Atlanta has been gripped by widespread vacancies and foreclosed, distressed properties. In the last 4 years alone, FCS has acquired, rehabbed and sold more than 35 units, reducing the number of vacant homes to below 140.

In 2015, FCS renovated 13 properties, sold six homes, and put one additional house under contract. Six new families in the neighborhood contributes to the stability of the community. Since 2001, FCS has successfully developed 96 parcels of land for residential use, including the construction of new homes and the renovation of existing properties. These housing projects have been a cornerstone of South Atlanta's revitalization and foundation of stability for the people that call them home.





IN 2015, FCS

- Renovated 13 properties
- Sold six homes
- Put one additional home under contract to sell
- Welcomed six new families to the neighborhood

CARVER NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET

Urban Atlanta has some of the most challenging food deserts in the country, where hundreds of thousands of people have little or no access to grocery stores.

For years in South Atlanta, food was only available for purchase from convenience store shelves, stocked with overpriced and over-processed snacks, sugary beverages, and canned goods. Coupled with long work hours and parenting responsibilities, neighbors faced serious threats to their physical, mental, and emotional wellness.





Carver NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET

Established May 16, 2015

Responding to this mounting crisis, FCS established the Carver Neighborhood Market on May 16, 2015. In addition to providing a source of wholesome groceries, the market is dedicated to community education, labeling healthy food options, providing a wholesome array of prepared food, doubling grocery assistance (EBT) benefits for fruits and vegetables on select days, and hosting chef demonstrations of healthy dish preparations. This humble opening transformed a food desert into a food oasis, creating 12 jobs for neighbors in the process.

PRIDE *for* PARENTS

However well-intentioned, Christmas gift delivery programs often undermine the dignity of families. We believe parents would prefer to provide for their families without needing to rely on the charity of others, and children would prefer to receive gifts from their parents, instead of people whom they have never met before!





\$31,500 earned in sales and donations for job training and programs

3,429 gifts purchased | **450** families served

FCS's Pride for Parents resolves the tensions many families experience by stocking a seasonal store in South Atlanta with toys and gifts, offered at deep discounts. Neighbors lacking funds are given the option of working at the store in order to earn their desired purchases. Pride for Parents offers three gifts at once: Christmas presents for children at affordable prices, dignity for parents who are able to express generosity to their families, and income opportunities for South Atlanta residents.

Pride for Parents presents a slate of opportunities for resourced partners to express their generosity. Every year, people organize toy drives, host shopping trips, make deliveries to the store, and volunteer their time while there. Pride for Parents offers many churches, organizations, and families a first look at FCS's dignity-preserving model of giving, which often inspires a deeper exploration of the organization's innovative approach to community development.

PRIDE FOR PARENTS 2015 OFFERED **THREE GIFTS** AT ONCE:

- **CHRISTMAS PRESENTS** for children at affordable prices
- **DIGNITY FOR PARENTS** who are able to express generosity to their families
- **INCOME OPPORTUNITIES** for South Atlanta residents

BECAUSE YOU GAVE

FINANCIALS*

TOTAL EXPENSE:	\$1,700,679	
PROGRAM:	\$1,341,434	78.88%
ADMINISTRATIVE:	\$262,843	15.46%
FUNDRAISING:	\$96,398	5.76%

**Unaudited Financials.*

CARVER NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET & COMMUNITY GROUNDS

Poured
4,986 CUPS OF COFFEE 

Sold
985 GALLONS OF MILK 

Rang up
41,000 TRANSACTIONS 

CHARIS HOUSING

Charis has at least one affordable rental or home on **EVERY STREET** within in the South Atlanta corridor.

Neighbors are joining together to beautify their landscaping, paint their homes, and start minor renovations themselves, as well as **LOOKING OUT FOR EACH OTHER.**



EDUCATION & TRAINING

Hosted three "Open House"
TRAINING EVENTS



Reached **300+ PEOPLE** with smart charity training

NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT

Created the **FLOURISHING NEIGHBORHOOD INDEX** to measure our community impact

BOARD *of* DIRECTORS

2015

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Managing Director, Investments,
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