



# EMPOWERING *neighborhoods* TO THRIVE

FCS | Focused Community Strategies  
Annual Report | 2017



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

JIM WEHNER



**"YOU HAVE TO MAKE A CLEAR CASE FOR SUPPORT, JIM. IF YOU DO NOT PAINT A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE DEVASTATION IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, NO ONE WILL WANT TO SUPPORT THE WORK**

**YOU DO. THE READER HAS TO FEEL THE NEED."**

This was advice given to me years ago by a talented grant writer and fundraiser. She wrote a grant proposal for FCS that was filled with vivid descriptions of blight and decay in our neighborhood. When I asked her to rewrite it, she was frustrated and did not understand why we would explain the necessity of our work any other way. Reading over her proposal was depressing, and it just did not accurately depict the neighborhood I know and love. Does Historic South Atlanta have blighted properties? Yes, it does. But that is not what I want you to read about. I want you to catch the vision of a neighborhood that is truly changing! Our model of community development is working and South Atlanta is beginning to flourish!

Studies have found a clear connection between material poverty and conditions of the surrounding community. Less than five out of a hundred children escape the gravitational pull of generational poverty because the surrounding community presents barriers blocking the road to success. Barriers like poor education, substandard housing, under-employment, and lack of access to resources all but ensure that individuals born into poverty will remain in poverty.

FCS is working hard each and every day to remove roadblocks to success. We dive deeply into a community to remove barriers so that families can make clear and steady progress. It is a patient work of pressing against systems and structures, but it is necessary and it is worth it. Families in our neighborhood are gaining leverage and traction and their story will not be one of barriers, but one of flourishing.

This is why we continue. We are opening stores and coffee shops. We are rehabbing houses and providing jobs. We are living as nextdoor neighbors and working side by side as friends. Our methods are not traditional, but this is how we do it. This is how we work together to remove barriers in a community like Historic South Atlanta, a neighborhood that I have come to love.

I remain convinced that the work of FCS is one of the top models of community development that exists, and I am continually humbled by our community of supporters who help with this heavy lift. Thank you for valuing our vision of flourishing and sticking with us through the long difficult work. I hope you will set aside some time this year and let me buy you a cup of coffee and show you around the neighborhood. I think you will be happy with your investment!

My best to you!

Jim Wehner



## Letter from the *Board Chair*



**The words of Isaiah 58 have long struck a deep chord with me: “You’ll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past.**

You’ll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again.” (Isaiah 58:12 MSG). There are barriers in this world that God’s image-bearers are called to confront and press against. The mission of FCS to “provide innovative and holistic development” leans directly into this calling and is what gives me continued passion to be involved in what this organization is doing; in the neighborhood of South Atlanta specifically and through its wider influence, around the country and the world.

The FCS Board began 2017 with a day-long working retreat where we updated our Strategic Plan for the next five years. What does it look like to wrap up our work in the South Atlanta neighborhood and begin looking towards our next neighborhood partnership? How do we best utilize the capital from the Glencastle sale to leverage into more innovative community development solutions? How do we grow the Lupton Center into an even greater vehicle for influencing people around the world to “reimagine charity” that spurs solutions that empower and dignify those whom we are seeking to help? What else can we do to make the Carver Market and Community Grounds an even better community asset for the neighborhood?

I am thrilled with the progress made this past year. Removing barriers to community flourishing is tough work. It can be slow work. But take the time to visit South Atlanta, talk to neighbors, grab a cup of coffee at Community Grounds, and hang out for just a bit with the incredible team at FCS. It’s hard not to come away encouraged and excited about the work being done here. It’s not that flashy and we’re not on the front page news. But this work is deep. This work is patient. It is incarnational in the same way that Jesus “moved into the neighborhood.” (John 1:14 MSG)

Thank you for helping FCS remove barriers to flourishing!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Teague'.

*Ben Teague, Board Chair*

**“I grew up in Historic South Atlanta and this community will always be home to me. I get my drive to help and be involved with the community from my family.”**

*– Lisa Haygood  
FCS Board Member*



**“FCS was both missional and a lifestyle that was part of a transformational strategy. We addressed both individuals and the community, and years down the road, you could see the difference in the neighborhood in spiritual growth and educational opportunity. That’s a needed mission!”**

*– Chris Gray,  
FCS Board Member*

**“I support FCS because I believe that a holistic approach to a targeted geographical area will lead to the healthiest most lasting good. I leave nearly every contact with FCS with a sense of gratitude for the work being done and for having been on this journey together. ”**

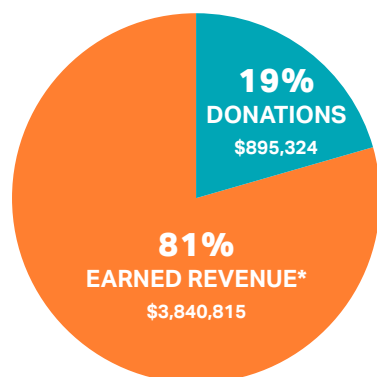
*– Florida Ellis  
FCS Board Member*



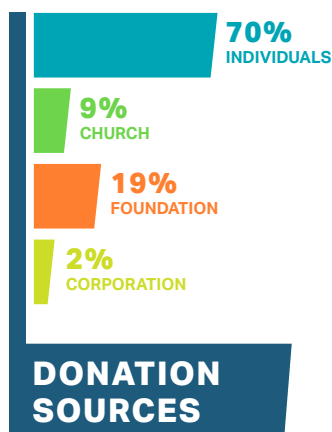
# Investing in our Neighborhood



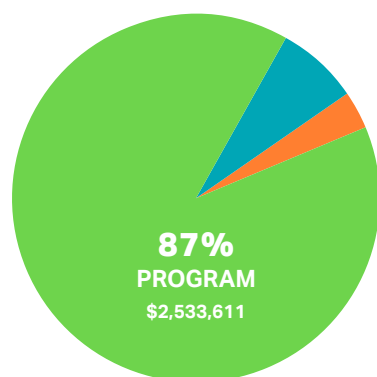
## 2017 REVENUE: \$4,736,139



\*includes portion of revenue from the sale of GlenCastle property



## 2017 EXPENSES: \$2,912,197



**8% GENERAL & ADMIN**  
\$232,976

**5% FUNDRAISING**  
\$145,610

**FOR EACH DOLLAR DONATED TO FCS, THREE DOLLARS ARE INVESTED** into the redevelopment of South Atlanta.

Two thirds of all revenue is earned income from home sales, rental revenue, grocery sales, cafe sales, training and consulting fees, bike sales, and book sales.



# Welcome to *Flourishing*

FCS has deeply invested in Historic South Atlanta for nearly two decades. Explore the neighborhood and experience flourishing.



## South Atlanta Food Co-Op

Geri Colvard is a member of the South Atlanta Food Co-op. She and 35 other households gather every two weeks to distribute over 3,000 pounds of food among co-op members. The South Atlanta Food Co-op is completely member-led, relying on members for everything from food transport to distribution. It is also an opportunity for neighbors to foster long-time friendships. "It's just like a family," says Ms. Geri. "And it's not just that I get something out of it, I get to help other people, too. I just enjoy it." After sorting through and distributing food amongst themselves, co-op members gather to pray together. Community and strong friendships are built while families are also becoming food secure.



FCS is partnering with Emory University's **Start:ME Southside** to provide local entrepreneurs with business training and early-stage financing.

## South Atlanta Park

Mazie Lynn and Troy Causey are long-time South Atlanta residents. They moved here fifteen years ago as intentional neighbors and they continue working towards positive change. Mazie Lynn shares, "I organize the Friends of the Park group, and I am grateful that FCS is generous with their resources. Any idea or project that incubates in the neighborhood already has a head start. Nothing begins at ground zero here." The Friends of South Atlanta Park worked with FCS and the City of Atlanta to secure funds for a new playground, and have completed a vision plan for the park. Exciting park improvements are on the horizon, and neighbors like the Causeys look forward to continually caring for the neighborhood's public spaces.



## South Atlanta Bike Shop

Shamar Pace started coming to the Bike Shop after school when he was 13 years old. Five years later he is now the Assistant Manager, leading other youth and learning critical job skills. "Working at the Bike Shop gives me a sense of responsibility," says Shamar. "I know people are relying on me, and I am learning management skills. It's about a lot more than bikes." His face lights up as he talks about mentoring younger children, and his passion for helping his community is clear. The Bike Shop helps develop young people who respect themselves and others, and are comfortable sharing their gifts and abilities freely.



## Carver Neighborhood Market

Antrel Adams lives in South Atlanta and has worked at Carver Market for a year and a half. He is also cross-training with our housing team learning how to build and repair homes. He values his time at work and sees it as an opportunity to learn new skills. "Since working at Carver Market, I've developed a strong work ethic, learned how to engage with employees and manage my finances." In addition to providing on-the-job training for people living in the neighborhood, Carver Market continues to be the neighborhood's only local source for fresh affordable produce.



## Community Grounds Cafe

Carver High School Principal, Yusuf Muhammad, walks to Community Grounds most days for a cup of coffee. Yusuf shares, "I know I can pick up the phone and talk with the FCS team any time and they can do the same with me. That's powerful. I don't know any other schools that have that kind of relationship with neighboring businesses. The kids know when they're at Community Grounds it's an extension of their school." He goes on to say, "This is a place where the kids can adjust to doing the right thing. When they make mistakes they're not demonized, they're brought in closer and taught." Community Grounds is more than a good cup of coffee; it is a safe and welcoming gathering spot for everyone in the neighborhood.



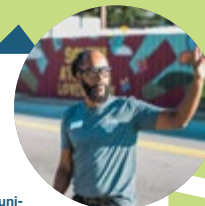
## Mixed-Income Housing

Tanisha Corporal and her son, Khairi, moved into South Atlanta almost 10 years ago through our Charis Homeownership Program. Homeownership "was scary at first, moving into a new home with my then five year old." Tanisha shares, "But I can say that fear turned into the fire that fueled my desire to stay involved. Since living in South Atlanta, I feel like our family is connected to people, a place, and a purpose. Home ownership has meant connection and courage." FCS continues to work towards creating a homeownership opportunities for families at all income levels. In 2017, 70% of residential real estate development was done by FCS.



## Lupton Center

Donell Woodson is a Lupton Center trainer. He deeply believes in FCS' mission to share what we've learned during 40 years of community development with changemakers all over the country. As he reflects on his commitment to curating thriving communities he says, "Reweaving the fabric of community is the definition of long obedience in the same direction." He is a bridge builder who is very skilled at bringing people together and creating community. His gifts are so essential as The Lupton Center continues creating a space for necessary but difficult conversations around chronic need - perceptions, choices, and solutions.



FCS' partner **Purpose Built Schools Atlanta** is putting South Atlanta's children on a trajectory for success.

FCS' partner **Remerge** nurtures and cares for youth in the neighborhood through weekly youth group gatherings.





**FCS**

focused  
**COMMUNITY**  
strategies

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