EMPOWERING Neighborhoods TO THRIVE

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 fellowshipped 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.
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.

Sincerely,

Jim Wehner
President

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.
WHERE **CHAOS** AND **BROKENNESS** ONCE REIGNED, STABLE NEIGHBORHOODS ARE EMERGING IN WHICH FAMILIES ARE **FLOURISHING** AND **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.
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
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.
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.
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!
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

3,429 gifts purchased | 450 families served
$31,500 earned in sales and donations for job training and programs
BECAUSE YOU GAVE

**FINANCIALS***

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*Unaudited Financials.

**CARVER NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET & COMMUNITY GROUNDS**

- Poured 4,986 cups of coffee
- Sold 985 gallons of milk
- Rang up 41,000 transactions
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
Ben Teague, Chair  
Managing Director, Investments, Walton Communities, LLC

Jim Wehner, President  
President, FCS

Frank Bishop, Treasurer  
Retired, Investco

Robert Fowler, Secretary  
President/CEO, Fowler Designs Associates, Inc.

Katie Delp  
Neighborhood Resident  
Executive Director, FCS

Jack Alexander  
Chairman, Rainmaker Group Holdings

Adam Allman  
Director, Regent Partners, LLC.

Allen Bell  
Executive Director, Atlanta Resource Foundation

John Chambliss  
Partner, The Ardent Companies

Bryant Cornett  
Senior Vice President, Brokerage Ackerman & Co.

P. Troy Causey, Neighborhood Resident  
Senior Director, Turner Sports

Florida Ellis  
Longtime Supporter

Chris Gray  
Power Grid System Coordinator, Georgia Power

Katherine Hankins  
Associate Professor, Georgia State University

Jaimie Hardin  
CEO, Hardin & Associates Consulting, Inc.

Lisa Haygood, Former Neighborhood Resident  
Program Lifecycle Manager, IBM

Billy Mitchell  
Retired, Carter and Associates

Adam Pannell  
Executive Vice President, Mergers & Acquisitions, Digital Insurance

Malcom D. Young, Jr.  
Attorney at Law, Partner, Smith, Grambrell & Russell, LLP
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Director of Finance & Administration

Shawn Duncan  
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