

CREATING *together*

FCS | Focused Community Strategies
Annual Report | **2016**





Empowering Neighborhoods to *thrive.*

Focused Community Strategies partners with under-resourced neighborhoods to provide innovative and holistic development that produces flourishing communities where God's Shalom is present.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

JIM WEHNER



CREATING TOGETHER. It is such a powerful idea. As neighbors we work side by side, utilizing our various gifts and talents to bring about a better reality for our under-resourced community. A community in decline does not turn around in the blink of an eye. It takes a minute. It is a subtle shift that requires locking arms with our neighbors. For a project of this scope, we must create the change together.

As residents of South Atlanta, we are intimately familiar with the neighborhood's struggles and victories. We see the blight - the vacant properties, underperforming schools, and unhealthy businesses. More importantly, we see the neighborhood's strengths and are committed to creating a flourishing community together. We are transforming a food desert into a food oasis with the opening of Carver Neighborhood Market. We are building community over coffee and good food at Community Grounds Cafe. We are filling once vacant properties with dedicated homeowners and renters that take interest in their block. We are growing partnerships that strengthen the neighborhood's schools, ensuring that our children receive the best education available. Together we are creating a neighborhood that is a great place to live!

This year we want you to hear from our neighbors. We want you to be inspired by their stories as much as by our work. Healthy neighbors are the building blocks of a healthy neighborhood, and we could not bring about a flourishing neighborhood without them. We are also immensely grateful to be surrounded by people who may not live in South Atlanta but believe in our neighbors and are committed to joining us as we re-weave the fabric of this community.

Thank you for creating alongside us!

Sincerely,

Jim Wehner

EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS TO *thrive*

FCS is honored to create an environment that empowers neighbors to give freely of their time and talents.

Neighbors who have lived here for their entire lives are working alongside residents who are new to the neighborhood to *create together* in Historic South Atlanta.

Here are a few of their stories.



Creating *Community* Together

When she was nineteen, Sarah traveled from Kentucky with her youth group to help renovate and transform a liquor store in Historic South Atlanta into a shop that would serve the neighborhood.



Sarah marvels at the deep connection that she has to the neighborhood, "I now live in the neighborhood and shop at the grocery store that my youth group helped many years ago."

Sarah moved to the neighborhood with her husband, Billy, eight years ago through FCS' housing program. They were immediately impressed by the intentional and diverse community. "On Saturday mornings we would go down

to Community Grounds and people would just be there," Sarah remembers. "It was a great way to meet people and be part of something special, because we'd never experienced community like that before."

Billy adds, "The coffee shop has created an organic space for people to come and to just share their gifts, and it's been awesome to watch."



Our 2-for-1 days saved **\$9,000** on produce for customers who shop using **SNAP** benefits.

Neighbors are involved in every step of revitalization:



Half of our staff and two board members live in our **target neighborhood**.

Billy and Sarah love how responsive the community was to each others' needs. "Someone needs a truck to borrow? Suddenly everyone in the neighborhood is looking for a truck," Billy says. "I remember thinking, 'This is unusual. You just don't see this in everyday life.'"

Billy and Sarah really appreciate that many of us at FCS actually live in the neighborhood that we serve. Living within the community is fundamental to who we are as an organization. This close proximity allows us to listen and truly understand the issues that are on everyone's minds, and to work seamlessly with our neighborhood to come up with great solutions. Sarah sums it up well: "It's a beautiful way to approach living and working in the city."



Last year Community Grounds and Carver Market served **175 people every day**—that's 175 opportunities to nurture relationships with our neighbors each and every day.



Creating *Friendships* Together

One of the best ways to engage a neighborhood is by fostering community among children.

Michelle and Larry know this better than anyone. Soon after moving to South Atlanta through FCS' housing program, they developed a youth community in the neighborhood that helps neighborhood children build friendships in a safe, encouraging environment.



Michelle and Larry lead a weekly youth group in playing fun games and sharing meals, but they also teach lessons about friendship and faith in a community context. Their youth group meets in FCS' Community Room each week. Within those walls friendships are formed, and neighbors are living out their faith. "We don't just see them once a week," Michelle says. "The kids come over to our house all the time. We do life together. They're wonderful kids, sweet and funny and deep."



FCS hosts community events that bring neighbors *together*:



Monthly coffee for parents and community members with local school board members



Social gatherings in partnership with the South Atlanta Civic League



Quarterly gathering of all south side service providers



Bi-weekly food co-operative for 30 South Atlanta families in partnership with Urban Recipe



Weekly youth group in partnership with Rmerge



At FCS we are always thankful when families in our housing program like Michelle and Larry become intentional neighbors who truly make the neighborhood a better place. We are particularly thankful for Michelle and Larry's work because it is a necessary complement to our housing program.

Since beginning our work in South Atlanta, we have transformed **160 homes**—that's a third of the homes in our neighborhood!



In 2016 we transformed 14 vacant properties into **beautiful homes** for new neighbors.



Since 2001 FCS has been creating housing opportunities that allow everyone to enjoy their restored neighborhood regardless of income level. This program has created a culture of diversity in South Atlanta and Michelle and Larry's youth group helps children who come from different backgrounds form genuine friendships with one another. We are thankful to be surrounded by a diverse group of neighbors who come together to serve the community that we all love!



Creating *Opportunities* Together



As department manager at the Carver Neighborhood Market, Diniah gets a close look at the transformation taking place in South Atlanta.

She's watched her community gain new opportunities as FCS creates and attracts small businesses and jobs into the neighborhood. "It's a big deal," Diniah says.

"Instead of people having to catch two buses and a train just to get to work, now they can just walk across the street. That's one of the biggest ways FCS empowers others to do for themselves."

We are teaching **transferable skills** at Carver Market, Community Grounds, and the South Atlanta Bike Shop including



timeliness



initiative



communication



interpersonal skills

These skills contribute to our employees' **success** down the road.



Diniah especially enjoys the Christmas season when Carver Market and Community Grounds transform into the Pride for Parents toy shop. Every December, the neighborhood hosts a toy sale with new, brand-name toys sold at reduced prices.



The average Pride for Parents toy price was \$4.67; less than half of the average price at conventional toy stores.



Pride for Parents brought joy to over **600 families** this Christmas!

Pride for Parents gives parents the opportunity to provide for their own children at Christmastime. "It's really good for low-income families who have a lot of kids," Diniah says. "And those funds go back towards the Carver Market, which allows us to continue serving the people of the neighborhood." Parents get to be generous with their families, children receive gifts that they actually wanted, and all proceeds go towards neighborhood revitalization. It's amazing how everyone benefits when programs are created with dignity in mind.



Nine community members are **employed** through Community Grounds and Carver Market and three have **full time positions**.



Creating *Relationships* Together

"When we first moved here, I didn't see a lot of people out of their homes," Gina recalls. "It didn't seem like a very social place." But Gina says that's changing, and the neighborhood has come to life.



Gina spent a year working at Community Grounds while attending college. She and her mom, Kim, live right around the corner from Carver Neighborhood Market and have witnessed the neighborhood's transformation firsthand.



South Atlanta residents have represented the neighborhood's interests in **100%** of FCS Board meetings.

Last year we partnered with twelve organizations to bring **needed resources** into the neighborhood.



Kim recalls that the atmosphere in the neighborhood really changed when Carver Market opened. For the first time in decades, she had the opportunity to run into her neighbors at the grocery store. "It's helped so many people, and the market has helped things socially," Kim says. She especially appreciates that Carver Market opened in direct response to the neighborhood's needs. "FCS is very aware of things that we need in the community," Kim says. "I like how they go about finding finances and resources and bringing them here." Carver Market has changed the way people in South Atlanta purchase food and interact with one another.



In 2016, Carver Market customers who shop using SNAP benefits purchased **317% more produce**, and there was a **50% increase** in overall produce sold.



Neighbors built relationships with each other and learned how to prepare healthy foods in **cooking classes**.

Gina and Kim have noticed that projects that are created by neighbors for neighbors always yield unexpected benefits. They were excited for fresh groceries to come to a "food desert" — an area that does not have access to fresh food. The market has measurably improved eating habits among the neighbors who shop there, and Gina and Kim have seen firsthand the positive social impact that the market has had on the neighborhood as a whole. We are thankful that Carver Market has had such a positive impact on our neighbors.



Creating *Beautiful Places* Together

Committed neighbors are the driving force behind South Atlanta's transformation.



Chris has been around FCS for a long time. "I've known about FCS since I was 12 years old," he remembers. "When I first came to South Atlanta, there was a liquor store literally right next to my house. It was a blight in the community." It stood right next to the neighborhood entrance and it did not set the right tone for the community to say the least. Neighborhood residents were so glad when FCS transformed the space. "FCS came in and turned that blight into a beacon of hope by offering a grocery store that now provides organic fruits and vegetables."



Last year we invested **\$10,000** in local farmers and **healthier food** for our neighbors.



Average rent in an FCS house is \$750; that's **\$600 less than the Atlanta average.**



Chris and his girlfriend, Sam, really value the relationships that they've created in South Atlanta. "My neighbor across the street rents her home from FCS. She comes over and we cook together. We love the way that FCS cultivates relationships through housing opportunities. FCS' rental rates allow low-income working parents and even college students to rent houses that are three minutes away from downtown." Affordable rentals are hard to come by in Atlanta—especially in a safe walkable neighborhood!



Through *Seeking Shalom*, **541 individuals** and **38 organizations** have a deeper understanding of material poverty.



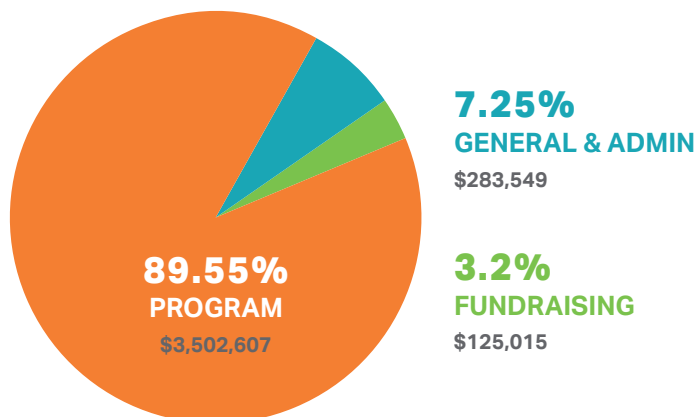
The Lupton Center has guided over **2,000 individuals** and **300 organizations** towards models that identify and build on community strengths, preserve dignity, and allow individuals to take part in creating their own success.



Chris is excited that FCS is training other organizations how to make similar changes in their communities. "I've seen FCS in many different phases of their life through all the programs that they offer. It's a beautiful thing to see FCS be able to go into a training model to train other nonprofits to do some of the revitalization work that they're doing," says Chris. He wants other communities to enjoy the holistic transformation that he's seen in South Atlanta.

2016 FINANCIALS

EXPENSES



On January 1, 2016, Charis Community Housing and FCS Community Economic Development merged into FCS. 2016 was our first year as a combined organization with **one singular mission.**

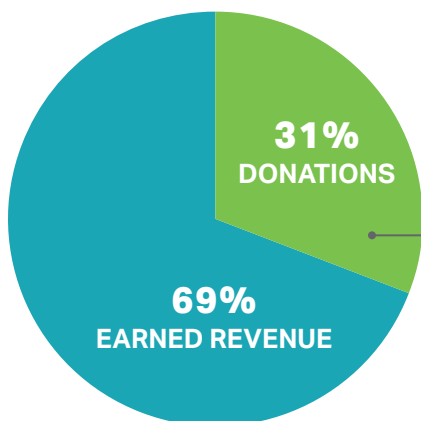


Through this merger, we reduced redundancies lowering our administrative and fundraising expenses from 16% to 10%—**a total savings of over \$84,000.**



In 2016 our program expenses grew by **\$861,763**, a significant **deepening of our impact** in Historic South Atlanta.

REVENUE



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, café sales, training and consulting fees, bike sales and book sales.

59% **INDIVIDUAL** (17% of total)
 8% **CHURCH** (3% of total)
 26% **FOUNDATION** (9% of total)
 7% **CORPORATION** (2% of total)

Thank You!

THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE WHO HELPED MAKE 2016 SUCH A WONDERFUL YEAR! YOUR DEDICATION IS AN INSPIRATION, AND WE COULD NOT DO ANY OF THIS WITHOUT YOU.

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS THAT YOU CAN *create together* WITH US:



Become a monthly donor



Volunteer at the Bike Shop



Host a Pride for Parents toy drive



Shop at Carver Market and Community Grounds



Enroll in Seeking Shalom



Pray for us

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR | BEN TEAGUE



THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS for FCS gathered for a full-day planning meeting in early 2017 to review the Strategic Plan from three years ago and to refresh that plan as we look towards the next five years. I came away amazed at how well the FCS team has executed on this plan and reenergized for the task ahead. Early in 2016, the boards of FCS, Charis Housing, and Community Economic Development (CED) merged into a singular organization that allowed us to communicate with greater clarity our mission of partnering with under-resourced neighborhoods to produce flourishing communities where God's Shalom is present.

In a culture where the needs and injustices of the entire world can be seen at our fingertips and the myriad of ways that we can respond can be overwhelming, I'm struck by the Incarnation story of God "moving into the neighborhood" in such a humble and specific way. Jesus' entire ministry never took him outside a small radius. I think that is what makes the mission and work of FCS resonate so deeply with me. We are incredibly targeted in our approach, focusing on one neighborhood at a time, pouring our energy, ideas, and resources into the neighborhood of South Atlanta.

I've been stuck on the word "Flourishing" in the FCS mission statement. In the Genesis creation story, God's creation was teeming and flourishing. Each of us are image bearers of our Creator, and I believe this calls us to work for a flourishing creation as well. The values that drive FCS (Dignity, Empowerment, and Neighboring) are crucial to us accomplishing this mission of flourishing neighborhoods. I'm grateful to be a part of that!

Sincerely,

Ben Teague

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2016

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PO Box 17628 | Atlanta, GA | 30316
fcsministries.org | (404) 627-4304