



# EPIC

Northwest Jacksonville Progress Report  
2012-2015

LISC  
Jacksonville

## Letter from the Executive Director



In 2012, the Building EPIC Communities initiative brought together residents and business owners from 19 Northwest Jacksonville neighborhoods to discover common ground and agree on mutual goals. The Quality-of-Life Plan they created became the blueprint for the projects and initiatives described in this summary report. Each reflects the energy and commitment of individual citizens as well as nonprofit organizations, charitable foundations, civic groups, businesses and government partners in urban revitalization. Paul Tutwiler and his staff at Northwest Jacksonville Community Development Corporation did a great job steering or assisting many of the projects described here — including the build-out of the North Point Town Center at Moncrief and Myrtle. Their most important allies were 19 neighborhood associations that embraced the EPIC planning process and rallied their members to participate. The work of these associations continues. In the end, their empowerment to work together for change may well turn out to be the most significant achievement of EPIC.

**Janet Owens**  
Executive Director

**LISC**  
Jacksonville  
*Helping neighbors  
build communities*

## Partners in Revitalization



As part of the LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation) network, **LISC JACKSONVILLE** is dedicated to helping local nonprofit community development corporations transform challenged urban neighborhoods into healthy, vibrant communities where individuals, businesses and families can thrive. Since it was established in 1999, LISC Jacksonville has invested \$61 million, which has leveraged an additional \$186 million in development in Jacksonville's urban neighborhoods. Supporting this vital work is the LISC national organization, the largest redevelopment nonprofit in the U.S., with chapters in 30 major cities and 70 rural communities. Since 1980, LISC has raised more than \$12 billion nationally to build or rehabilitate more than 289,000 affordable homes and develop 46 million square feet of retail, community and educational space nationwide. LISC support has leveraged \$33.9 billion in total development activity.

Another way national LISC supports local chapters is by sharing research and experience. In the spring of 2012, building upon the proven national LISC

model Building Sustainable Communities, LISC Jacksonville designated two urban communities to pilot the model locally and called the initiative Building EPIC Communities (Empower People...Inspire Change). LISC's initial investment has supported the engagement work and the planning process. Learn more at [www.liscjacksonville.org](http://www.liscjacksonville.org).

### **NORTHWEST JACKSONVILLE CDC**

Northwest Jacksonville Community Development Corporation improves the quality of life in its neighborhood in a way that embraces economic diversity, makes businesses eager to invest, honors area history and creates a thriving community for families. To accomplish this mission, NJCDC sponsors projects that promote revitalization of the community through education, planning, housing rehabilitation and new construction, economic development and advocacy. Learn more at [www.northwestjaxcdc.org](http://www.northwestjaxcdc.org). ■



**Northwest Jacksonville CDC**  
Housing | Social Services | Economic Development

# HISTORIC NORTHWEST JACKSONVILLE



J.P. Small Memorial Stadium

Northwest Jacksonville is an urban core district of 19 residential neighborhoods and two commercial corridors, one at Moncrief and Myrtle and another on Kings Road. During the 2012 listening sessions that began Northwest Jacksonville's EPIC journey of redevelopment, residents voted to honor their community's historic past and announce a new era of vitality by proclaiming it "The District of Soul."

The area is home to two historic educational institutions: Edward Waters



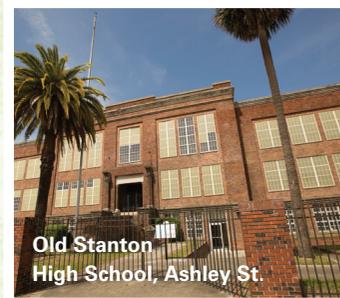
Early Stanton school building



Edward Waters College

College, founded in 1866 to educate freed slaves, and Stanton College Preparatory School, one of the highest rated public high schools in America. Stanton opened in the 1860s as Jacksonville's first school for black children. Originally downtown, the school was moved to its Northwest Jacksonville campus on 13th Street in 1953. Another District of Soul landmark,

J.P. Small Memorial Park, is located nearby on Myrtle Avenue. Dating to 1912, it was the city's first municipal recreation field and served as Jacksonville's primary baseball park until 1953. It was home field to the Jacksonville Red Caps, a Negro League team, and at different times served as spring training headquarters for the New York Giants, Brooklyn Dodgers, Philadelphia Athletics and Pittsburgh Pirates. Famous players who took the field at J.P. Small include Hank Aaron, Satchel Paige, Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Ty Cobb. The ballpark has had many names over the years. In 1980, it was renovated and renamed for J.P. Small, a Stanton High teacher, coach and athletic director from 1934-1969.



Old Stanton High School, Ashley St.



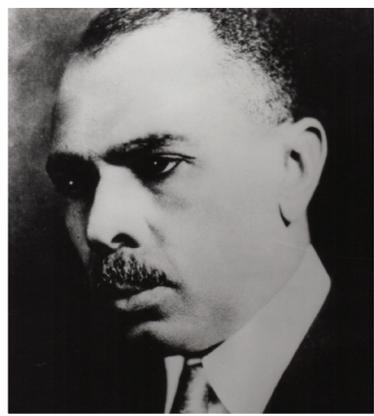
Stanton College Preparatory School, W. 13th St.



**Eartha Mary Magdelene White (1876-1974)**

Eartha White was one of Jacksonville's most important and influential philanthropists. Inspired by her adoptive mother Clara, she pushed through gender and racial barriers to become a successful businesswoman and a tireless advocate for the poor and disadvantaged of Northeast Florida. Eartha was also influential in Washington, D.C., especially through her close association with Eleanor Roosevelt. Eartha graduated from Stanton School

and Florida Baptist Academy. Her greatest legacy is the Clara White Mission in Downtown Jacksonville. Much of the food for its outreach and vocational training programs comes from White Harvest Farms in Northwest Jacksonville. A home that Eartha White lived in still stands on this property.



**James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)**

Like Eartha White, James Weldon Johnson was a champion for economic justice and civil rights, both in his hometown of Jacksonville and on the national scene. A graduate of Stanton School, Johnson later served as its principal. This American legend was also a writer during the cultural, social and artistic movement known as the Harlem Renaissance; a college professor; attorney; diplomat; songwriter; and civil rights activist. He is best known for his leadership in the NAACP. James Weldon

wrote the lyrics to his brother John Rosamond Johnson's famous African-American anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing."



**Abraham Lincoln Lewis (1865-1947)**

Jacksonville native A.L. Lewis founded an insurance company, became Florida's first African-American millionaire and helped his community enjoy rights that were otherwise denied to them during segregation. In 1926, he opened the Lincoln Golf and Country Club in Northwest Jacksonville. A decade later, he founded American Beach in nearby Nassau County. Lewis was a major benefactor of Edward Waters College and Bethune-Cookman College. The State of Florida honors his

memory with a historical marker at the Lewis mausoleum on Moncrief Road.



**James Edward Hutchins (1890-1970)**

James Hutchins was a leading African-American architect-builder who made his home in New Town near Edward Waters College. Beginning in the 1930s, he designed and built a number of churches for African-American congregations in Jacksonville. His company also built homes in the upscale Durkee Gardens and College Park subdivisions of Northwest

Jacksonville. After World War II, Hutchins trained returning black veterans in the building trades. In the process, he became mentor to a generation of builders who helped Jacksonville grow after the war. ■

# Making Urban Renewal EPIC



## DEFINING PRIORITIES

From May to September of 2012, program facilitators gathered feedback from more than 100 neighborhood residents, business owners and workers in Northwest Jacksonville neighborhoods. They met with them through individual interviews, focus groups and listening tours. Historical research was conducted to provide context. At the end of the process, a report on the listening sessions was shared with residents. At the same meeting, participants were invited to create a vision for their neighborhood; develop goals, strategies and action plans with key measures of progress; and identify a list of potential community partners. Following this “visioning” day, neighborhood leaders conducted a series of community forums to refine the recommendations and craft a final

LISC Jacksonville introduced Northeast Florida to *Building EPIC Communities* (*Empower People...Inspire Change*) in 2012. The strategy was drawn from *Building Sustainable Communities*, a community redevelopment model that has been transformative for 111 neighborhoods in 29 U.S. cities. Northwest Jacksonville and Historic Eastside/Springfield were the neighborhoods chosen to pilot EPIC. Since then, these communities have risen to the challenge of working together for significant, lasting change.

## A “BOTTOM-UP” CONCEPT

People who know the most and care the most about their neighborhoods are at the heart of EPIC. The approach is a departure from traditional urban redevelopment models. Instead of asking residents to embrace change initiated by outside sources who “know their needs better than they do,” EPIC pivots on locally generated solutions. In Northwest Jacksonville, the Northwest Jacksonville Community Development Corporation was chosen as the facilitating (“convening”) agency to help residents implement EPIC — starting with identifying and prioritizing their goals and objectives.

Quality of Life Plan. This plan is available at [www.liscjacksonville.org](http://www.liscjacksonville.org).

## EPIC PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

Transformation is possible only in communities where the corporate, public and private sectors come together to invest in change. The projects described in this report were made possible through the efforts of Northwest Jacksonville residents and the partners and sponsors listed opposite.

## EPIC PROGRESS

Accomplishments that grew from Northwest Jacksonville’s EPIC vision are impressive. Momentum continues to build as residents witness and enjoy what they have created together. Turn the pages to see the work that residents, Northwest Jacksonville CDC and community-minded sponsors have accomplished so far — and where we are headed in the future. ■

## Partner List

- American Cancer Society
- American Heart Association
- American Red Cross
- Baptist Health
- Beaver Street Enterprise and Incubator
- Beaver Street Farmers Market
- Black Farmers of Ocala
- Buchanan Signs
- Chris' Sign Shop
- City of Jacksonville
  - Housing Authority
  - Housing and Community Development Division
  - Sheriff's Office
  - Veteran Affairs
  - YouthBuild Program
- Clara White Mission
- Communities in Schools of Jacksonville
- Concorde University
- Dreamworks Photography
- Dryer College
- Durkeeville Historical Society
- Duval County Health Department
  - Andrew Jackson High School
- Raines High School
- Ribault Senior High School
- Saint Clair Evans Academy
- Ebenezer United Methodist Church
- Edward Waters College
- Emergency Preparedness/ Duval County Emergency Management
- Emmett Reed Community Center
- Family Foundations of Northeast Florida
- Farah & Farah Law Firm
- Farm Share
- Feeding Northeast Florida
- Fifth Third Bank
- Florida Black Farmers & Agriculturalists Association (FBFAA)
- Florida Department of Health
- Florida Department of Children and Families
- Florida Pump Service
- Florida State College at Jacksonville
- Graham Public Library
- HandsOn Jacksonville
- Home Depot
- Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce
- Jacksonville Community Council, Inc.
- Jacksonville Fire and Rescue
- Jacksonville Job Corps
- Jacksonville University
- Kip Pressure Washing
- LISC Jacksonville
- Lutheran Social Services
- Jacksonville Area Legal Aid
- Myrtle/Moncrief Business Association
- Norman Fence Company
- Northeast Florida Community Action Agency
- Northside Love Arts & Vendors Market
- Northwest Jacksonville Community Development Corporation
- Northwest Jacksonville Neighborhood Associations
  - 29th & Chase
  - Golfair Estates
  - Good Neighbor MANIA
  - Grand Park Community
- Association
  - Hendersonville
  - Joe James Community Association
  - Magnolia Gardens North Association Inc.
  - Magnolia Gardens
  - Moncrief Springs
  - Myrtle Moncrief Business Association
  - Old Floradale Homeowners Association
  - Planet Watch Association
  - Robinson's Addition
  - Royal Terrace Network
  - Sherwood Forest I
  - Sherwood Forest II
  - Simond-Johnson Park
  - Washington Heights Estates Tenants Association
- Nourishment Network
- Pauline Concrete & Landscaping
- RealSense – United Way of Northeast Florida
- Regina's Catering
- Sam's Wholesale Club
- SCORE Jacksonville – Small Business Counseling
- SHADCO
- SS Grix
- Steve Wells Artist/ Photographer
- Success Gardening
- Teach for America Jacksonville
- Tiki Graphics
- United Way of Northeast Florida
- University of North Florida
- University of Phoenix
- U.S. Naval Academy
- U.S. Small Business Administration, North Florida District Office
- Urban League
- Virginia College
- Wealth Watchers
- WellCare
- Wells Fargo NeighborhoodLIFT Program
- YACHT, Inc.

# QUALITY OF LIFE UPDATE

Through the EPIC process, revitalization projects are organized around visions that residents of the neighborhood identify and prioritize. In Northwest Jacksonville, these visions included: Easy to Be Healthy, Family Wealth for Generations, United and Safe, Best Students in Schools, and Pride in Our Neighborhood. Members of the community developed objectives, created strategies and designed projects with measurable outcomes that reflected their priorities.

Many of the projects described here cross boundaries to impact more than one vision simultaneously. For the sake of clarity and simplicity, projects are categorized by the vision that describes their most significant contribution to neighborhood revitalization. If you would like to learn more about an individual project or get involved in community building as a volunteer or sponsor, please contact LISC at (904) 353-1300 or Northwest Jacksonville CDC at (904) 598-9196.

## VISION #1: EASY TO BE HEALTHY

### FOOD DESERT MAKEOVER

**Challenge:** How could Northwest Jacksonville become a healthier community, with more access to fresh fruits and vegetables?

**Solution:** By introducing farmers markets that sell fresh, nutritious, locally grown produce at wallet-friendly prices.

**Progress so far:** Since they began in April 2013, farmers markets held quarterly and during special events at the North Point Town Center on Moncrief

Road have drawn more than 1,800 participants and 241 volunteers — and provided more than 42 tons of fresh fruits and vegetables to local families.

**Impact:** With the help of volunteers and food donations, an initial investment of \$7,200 has led to the creation of 117 vendor jobs and \$300,000 in vendor income.

### How the project fits into the “Easy to Be Healthy” vision and strategies:

- It helps residents eat better in a way that suits their taste, budget and lifestyle.
- It complements other local wellness efforts.
- Convenience stores and grocers are also being asked to provide healthier food options at lower prices year-round.

### HEALTHY NEW MOVES

**Challenge:** How could Northwest Jacksonville enjoy fun, free ways to get out and move?

**Solution:** By repurposing a former rail line into the S-Line Urban Greenway, a walking and biking trail through Jacksonville’s Springfield and Durkeeville neighborhoods, by organizing neighborhood walk and dance groups and by partnering with sponsors to host large-scale walks.

**Progress so far:** Neighborhood walk and dance groups are flourishing, and the S-Trail has become a popular spot for walks and bike rides. Residents gathered for three sponsored events: the Jacksonville Veterans Walk, American Cancer Walk and American Heart Association Walk. These walks were supported by 12 sponsors and drew a total of 207 participants.

**Impact:** A total of 1,700 volunteers helped leverage an investment of \$9,187 to create a community

impact of at least \$200,000 in health benefits and healthcare savings.

### How the project fits into the “Easy to Be Healthy” vision and strategies:

- Well-lit, secure trails provide residents with a safe place to exercise.
- The S-Trail links Northwest Jacksonville to the national “Rails to Trails” initiative which is turning non-operational rail lines into neighborhood amenities.
- The enthusiasm of residents will make it easier to convince the City that a health-fitness club and more recreational venues are needed in this area.

### NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTH FESTIVAL

**Challenge:** How could an underserved area create excitement about healthy lifestyles, make it relevant to residents, and draw crowds?



**Solution:** By creating an annual “Health and Neighborhood Day,” featuring free health screening, live entertainment, free legal counsel and farmers market with fresh fruits and vegetables at great prices.

**Progress so far:** The first Health and Neighborhood Day on June 16, 2012 was so popular that it was repeated on June 15, 2013, and June 21, 2014. This project has been a shining star in Northwest Jacksonville, raising awareness of healthy lifestyles, providing basic health screens and creating opportunities for fun and camaraderie.

**Impact:** The total cost of three events was \$20,000, with an estimated economic impact of at least \$50,000. Approximately 32 vendors (for-profit and nonprofit) participated; more than 100 volunteers worked side-by-side with Northwest Jacksonville CDC staff and board members.

**How the project fits into the “Easy to Be Healthy” vision and strategies:**

- The events are a great way to communicate health and nutrition information and provide important health screens.

- The availability of delicious food, including fresh produce, reinforces the lessons participants learn about healthy lifestyles.
- Free legal counsel is a popular feature of the event.

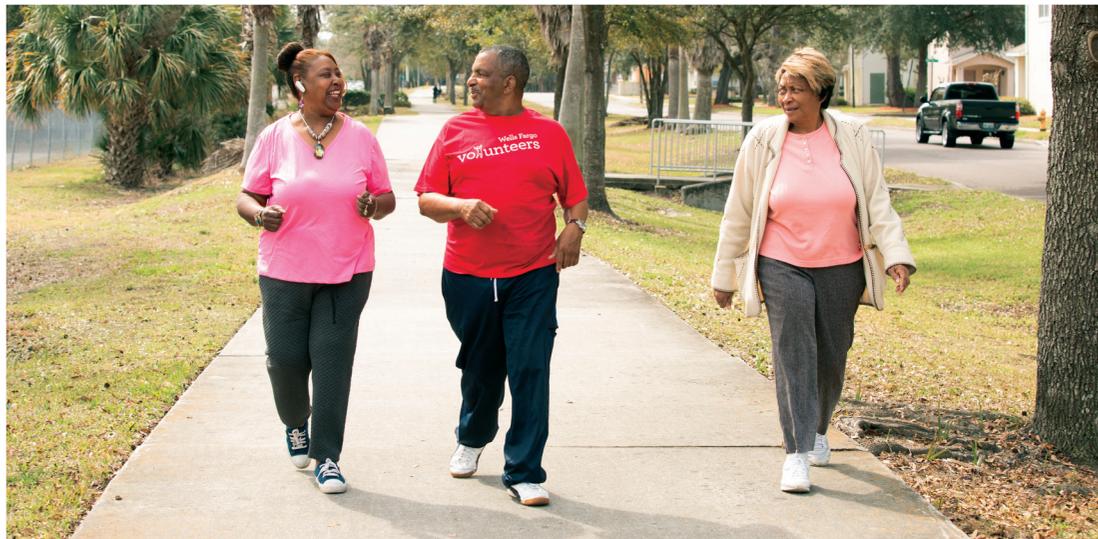
### URBAN GARDENS GROWING COMMUNITY HEALTH

**Challenge:** How could two Northwest Jacksonville neighborhoods turn blighted properties into community amenities?

**Solution:** By mobilizing their neighborhood associations to create gardens on abandoned lots.

**Progress so far:** In October 2014, Hendersonville residents completed a vegetable and herb garden on an unsightly lot in their neighborhood. They celebrated afterwards with a festive block party. In January 2015, the Planet Watch Neighborhood Association finished a similar project on an abandoned lot at the corner of Davis and Flanders Street.

**Impact:** Each community garden created three jobs and recruited and trained approximately 27



## Rails-to-Trails Transformation

Jacksonville natives Larry and Eunice Rogers moved to Hendersonville 11 years ago to a house that Mr.



Rogers inherited from his aunt. It didn't take them long to realize the importance of having an active neighborhood association. “We are an elderly community with many needs,” says Mr. Rogers. “We have to make sure that we look out for one another.”

As president, Mr. Rogers is involved in outreach projects year-round, including Thanksgiving and Christmas. In 2012, he and his wife helped rally their neighbors to participate in EPIC listening sessions so they could communicate their concerns and their vision for Hendersonville. One wish that came true is the S-Trail, a 4.8-mile walking and biking lane that was converted from a defunct rail. Connecting New Town and Durkeeville with Springfield and Brentwood, it runs from Myrtle Street north of Beaver Street to the intersection of Norwood and Gateway. “Now our elderly can take walks and live a healthier lifestyle,” says Mr. Rogers. “And our kids going to school have a safe path to travel. We organized a safety patrol to make it even safer.” ■

## White Harvest Farms

When Eartha White died in 1974, an 11-acre parcel of land on Moncrief Road was part of her estate. In 2014, it was combined with three and a half additional acres to form White Harvest Farms, an urban farm that raises food for the Clara White Mission, other charities and food desert families in Jacksonville. The farm is maintained by veterans who live at Clara White Mission, working under the supervision of Farm Director William Bryd. "White Harvest began as a service project of the Economics Department at UNF," says Ju'Coby Pittman, CEO and President of the Clara White Mission. "One of the reasons we liked the idea and initiative is that the curriculum aligned with the culinary arts jobs training program at the mission and at the same time, provided fresh, healthy food for our residents and clients. It has proven a valuable asset in serving nutritious meals to the 400-500 clients that visit the mission daily."

Pittman believes that Eartha White would have heartily endorsed the venture. "The name Eartha means 'storehouse to all,' and that is how she lived her life," says Pittman. "She used all of her energy and resources to help the poor and underserved. Eartha was the first African-American member of the Community Chest board (the

precursor to United Way of Northeast Florida). She formed the first Boys & Girls Club in the African-American community. She founded a tuberculosis hospital and built the first African American nursing home (Eartha White Nursing Home) in the city. She started the mission in 1901. She even built a pool on her property, so that children in Northwest Jacksonville could learn to swim."

In addition to producing food for the mission, the farm supplies produce for the White Harvest "Farm to Faith" program. Initiated by Mayor Lenny Curry in partnership with Bethel Baptist Institutional Church, the program provides an onsite farmers market at churches in Health Zone 1 for low-income families. It also provides a farmers market that is open to the public on the first Saturday of each month from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at 5348 Moncrief Road next to the farm. "The farm is right in the middle of a food desert," says Pittman. "Residents around here are so excited to be able to buy fresh vegetables close to home — while we are able to address some of the health disparities."

A number of sponsors have invested in getting the farm up and running, including LISC Jacksonville, Blue Foundation, Jessie Ball duPont Fund, USDA, Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, North/South Institute, Fresh Access Bucks and the Health Department. Students from UNF, JU and the UF Extension Department participate and Junior League volunteers have rolled out educational programming to the neighborhood. "It really is a public/private partnership," says Pittman. "We are grateful for the help we have received from the community to sustain this important project. We are now selling our surplus crops (collards, cabbage, broccoli, cucumbers, kale, strawberries, string beans, yellow squash and zucchini) to Sysco Foods, local community vendors and restaurants." ■





volunteers. The Hendersonville garden cost \$5,150; the Planet Watch garden cost \$4,882. Each produces fresh vegetables and herbs that help residents eat healthier in neighborhoods where access to affordable fresh produce is otherwise limited. Another benefit is the camaraderie that has grown among neighbors who gather to tend the gardens.

**How the project fits into the “Easy to Be Healthy” vision and strategies:**

- The gardens created pride, volunteer leadership opportunities and strengthened bonds within neighborhood associations.
- Healthy eating contributes to the overall health and well-being of residents.
- Local gardeners can sell produce they don’t need to local markets.

## VISION #2: FAMILY WEALTH FOR GENERATIONS

### PLANNING FOR BRIGHTER FUTURES

**Challenge:** How could the Northwest Jacksonville CDC help residents whose credit scores and lack of financial know-how pose a risk to family security?

**Solution:** By bringing credit repair and long-term financial planning workshops to the community.

**Progress so far:** Beginning in June 2012, these workshops trained 125 residents in skills such as building a budget, growing savings and improving

## From Single Mom to Homeowner

Khalilah Dunlap was in nursing school and going through a divorce when she decided to move to Northwest Jacksonville to be closer to her mother. “I had just finished a two-year nursing program and was going back to complete a bachelor’s program,” says Dunlap. “Because of school, I was working part-time. I knew I had to find something I could afford.”

She was pondering next steps when she noticed a sign on Golfair Boulevard. “I saw a sign that the Northwest Jacksonville CDC had put up about qualifying for mortgage assistance. I stopped and wrote the number down so I could find out more.”

Dunlap worked with Dara Davis at Northwest Jacksonville CDC to enroll in a first-time homebuyers class. The class covered credit, amortization and loan terms, interest, escrow, preventive home maintenance, budgeting for repairs and more. After completion, Davis helped Dunlap find a lender. “The help I received made a big difference,” says Dunlap. “I was able to buy a house I could afford that was also close to my mom.”



Dunlap’s class was sponsored by Habijax. Northwest Jacksonville CDC also partners with Family Foundations of Northeast Florida to host financial literacy classes. “We are one of the locations that hosts an 8-hour training session for participants who are seeking HUD-approved certification,” says Dara Davis. “An instructor from Family Foundations teaches the class. During Wise Money Week every April, they waive the \$50 fee and provide a free lunch. We give out prizes to keep people engaged and excited. Participants learn about home ownership challenges, financing, maintenance, understanding how a title company works, how a realtor works. They leave well equipped to purchase a home.” ■



or rebuilding credit scores. Participants were empowered to improve the long-term financial health of their family/household, to learn what credit is and why it matters and how to progress from renting to homeownership.

**Impact:** Through the efforts of 15 volunteers, this program was accomplished at no cost, with an estimated financial impact of \$10,000 to the community.

**How the project fits into the “Family Wealth for Generations” vision and strategies:**

- Increased financial literacy leads to more home ownership and better access to affordable financing.
- It is key to building family wealth and is a legacy parents can hand down to children.
- It empowers individuals to seek lenders for small business start-ups.

#### NO PLACE LIKE HOME

**Challenge:** How can Northwest Jacksonville become a community of homeowners?

**Solution:** Through a program that helps first-time homebuyers qualify for down payment assistance of up to \$15,000 to purchase a home in the area.

**Progress so far:** Although the housing downturn hit Northwest Jacksonville hard, help is on the way. A program funded through the City of Jacksonville will soon begin providing assistance to residents who can afford a mortgage but don’t have savings for a down payment.

**Impact:** The City bears costs, but will benefit when new home construction and rehabbing of existing homes boost the property tax base. New construction jobs will be good for the area.

**How the project fits into the “Family Wealth for Generations” vision and strategies:**

- New homeowners will learn how to own a house, care for it, and build assets for the future.

- Their success will encourage others to participate in financial training and seek home buying assistance.

## BUILDING A BETTER BUSINESS COMMUNITY

**Challenge:** How could area business owners seek funding to create new businesses and make minority investors more aware of investment opportunities in Northwest Jacksonville?

**Solution:** By creating the Myrtle/Moncrief Commercial Corridor Business Association, a group that offers members grant-writing assistance and promotional support.

**Progress so far:** The association now has its own video and has hosted three events to promote the Myrtle/Moncrief corridor. The first was held in May 2013, with subsequent events on August 7, 2013 and June 18, 2014.

**Impact:** Video production and three events cost \$25,000 and have had an economic impact of \$30,000 so far. At least five jobs were created for photographers, videographers and vendors. Twenty-eight volunteers were instrumental to success.

### How the project fits into the “Family Wealth for Generations” vision and strategies:

- By fostering relationships and knowledge-sharing, the association is encouraging residents to start businesses and build assets for the future.
- Individuals can see that “all ships rise” when they work together toward a mutual goal.
- It is helping to change the way insiders and outsiders think about the future of Northwest Jacksonville.

## NURTURING STARTUPS

**Challenge:** How could Northwest Jacksonville acquire a business incubator program to support



entrepreneurs and microenterprises in Northwest Jacksonville?

**Solution:** By enlisting the help of groups such as Beaver Street Enterprise and Wealth Watchers to provide resources.

**Progress so far:** Since launch in August 2013, eight office suites have been made available for lease. A Beaver Street Enterprise program provided technical assistance and business support resources. The program is ongoing.

**Impact:** The office project cost \$80,000 and has had an economic impact of at least \$100,000. Part of the impact is job creation, including five permanent new jobs and three volunteer positions. Another successful start-up, the North Point Market and Café, is now a focal point of the North Point Town Center at the corner of Myrtle and Moncrief.

### How the project fits into the “Family Wealth for Generations” vision and strategies:

- Small business ventures need the right support

at the right moments to succeed and stay operational for generations.

- Even after businesses “term out” of their incubator phase, they still have access to occasional training, accounting/financial management assistance and other services.
- Small businesses that need loans, microloans and guarantee programs can connect to these lifelines or in some cases, venture capital and “angel” investors.

## SHARING THE WEALTH

**Challenge:** How could a free financial program be communicated to people who would benefit most?

**Solution:** By using an event-filled holiday weekend to distribute informational brochures.

**Progress so far:** On Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend in January 2014, 350 United Way volunteers canvassed Northwest Jacksonville to distribute brochures about United Way of Northeast Florida’s RealSense Prosperity Campaign, a free tax assistance program that helps participants receive tax refunds by leveraging the Earned Income Tax Credit and provides free financial workshops and one-on-one financial counseling to teach money-management skills.

**Impact:** The project cost \$175; the community benefit is estimated at \$2 million in tax returns. Participants also benefited from access to free financial education workshops and counseling designed to help them build wealth.

### How the project fits into the “Family Wealth for Generations” vision and strategies:

- It educated the public about a beneficial program provided free through United Way.
- In addition to putting cash into pockets through tax returns, it opened the door to free financial counseling and workshops that can help participants build a better future for their family.

## Organizing to Fight Crime

After Khalilah Dunlap moved her three children into their new house on West 23rd Street, she ran into a problem that could happen in any neighborhood — but is more common in an elderly, urban core community like hers. “My next-door neighbor got too old to live on his own, so his children moved him to California,” says Dunlap. After that, the house stood empty. “It was an older house, and eventually, a lot of people started hanging out there. It was becoming a worry,” she says. “I called Mr. Tutwiler (at Northwest Jacksonville CDC) to see what I could do. I learned from him that there was once an active neighborhood organization here. He convinced me to get it back up and going.” Dunlap approached the association’s former leadership for help. “We all came to an agreement that a strong neighborhood association was needed if we were serious about lowering the crime rate and shutting down illegal houses,” she says. “No one wants their children or the children of others growing up in a neighborhood where they can’t walk down the street safely. But sometimes people need a push to do something about it.”

Dunlap has faced obstacles to success. “We had to apply for a city license to reinstate



our association,” she says. “The old association owed back taxes and that had to be paid. And you have to pay to be incorporated and establish 501(c)(3) non-profit status. But a core group is working through it and trying to get other neighbors involved.” So far, the fledgling 29th and Chase Neighborhood Association has organized a cleanup and participated in a walk with the area’s Pastoral Alliance. “We’re working to build strong partnerships so that neighbors can see the value of a strong association,” says Dunlap. “With enough people gathered for the same goals, we can make this a better and safer place to live.” ■

## VISION # 3: UNITED AND SAFE

### PARTNERS IN CRIME-STOPPING

**Challenge:** What could Northwest Jacksonville do to help lower its crime rate?

**Solution:** By collaborating with residents, property owners and businesses to develop strategies to deter and report crime.

**Impact:** So far, 150 volunteers have participated in an effort that was accomplished at no cost. The impact on the community is enormous and will be long-lasting.

**How the project fits into the “United and Safe” vision and strategies:**

- Improving communication between citizens and the JSO helps build trust.
- Citizens who know and trust police are more likely to help them keep their neighborhood safe.
- Safer streets attract more homeowners, small businesses and other private investment.

### CONNECTING RESIDENTS TO RESOURCES

**Challenge:** How could residents gain better access to emergency and non-emergency government contacts?

**Solution:** By creating and distributing an Emergency and Non-Emergency Government Contact Information booklet that lists city, state and government resources and contact information.

**Progress so far:** More than 250 community residents received the first annual booklet in April 2013. An updated version was distributed at the next HANDS event in June 2015. The Northwest Jacksonville CDC plans annual updates of this vital information.

**Impact:** Published at an investment of only \$600, the booklet has paid for itself many times over. Its Community Jobs section, for example, has helped link residents to employment opportunities. The publication itself created four jobs and helped train 10 volunteers.

**How the project fits into the “United and Safe” vision and strategies:**

- It helps foster neighborhood pride and cohesiveness, encouraging residents to report environmental problems.
- It provides an important resource when residents need help or information.
- It leads to greater participation in neighborhood associations and encourages younger residents to become active members and leaders.

### DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

**Challenge:** How could we help residents and businesses prepare to save lives if disaster strikes?

**Solution:** Since information and preplanning are the best way to save lives in an emergency, Northwest Jacksonville CDC and the Duval County Office of Emergency Preparedness and Job Corps planned a series of training classes for area residents and business owners. Participants learn and practice emergency plans for a variety of situations, from fire to tornado.

**Progress so far:** The program has been developed and will be implemented when funding becomes available. It will offer certifications in disaster preparedness in conjunction with the Red Cross and Emergency Management.

**Impact:** The projected cost of the program is \$1,300. The impact of saving lives, property and businesses is impossible to calculate. At least 20 volunteers will participate in the workshops.

**How the project fits into the “United and Safe” vision and strategies:**

- Every family and business needs an emergency or natural disaster plan.
- Families who prepare in advance are better equipped to act quickly, without chaos and confusion.
- A master neighborhood list makes it faster and easier to alert or locate a resident.

### VISION #4: BEST STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS

#### RAISING FUTURE LEADERS

**Challenge:** How could Northwest Jacksonville encourage students to have a voice in neighborhood events and planning?

**Solution:** By working with local public and private schools to develop mentoring opportunities and by enlisting the help of The YACHT (Youth Achieving Collegiate Hopes of Tomorrow), an organization for high school and middle school students.

**Progress so far:** Since 2013, 25 students have had the opportunity to talk with successful professionals who were once students like them. Mentors provide career guidance, encouragement and opportunities to make professional contacts.

**Impact:** To date, the cost of this ongoing volunteer program has been \$112. Twelve volunteers have participated so far.

**How the project fits into the “Best Students and Schools” vision and strategies:**

- Mentors provide career guidance, including course recommendations and experiences that help build student resumes.
- Mentoring encourages young people to engage in their communities.
- It can positively influence test scores, build confidence and influence students to mentor other students.

## Celebrating Success at Saint Clair Evans

Caring volunteers who support students behind the scenes can make a big difference, especially in an economically challenged neighborhood. Because she knew the needs at Saint Clair Evans Academy, a historic public elementary school on Moncrief Road, a former teacher assistant decided to stay involved after she retired. “These are hard-working children.



They put in the effort,” says Carol Gamble, who worked at the school for 34 years and now serves as treasurer of its parent-teacher association. “The PTA does what we can to help. For example, we raise money to serve breakfast and buy little incentives

for children who come to school on Saturdays for special help sessions. We hosted a big breakfast for all the students on state testing day. We do different fundraisers and put on programs. A favorite is Saint Clair Evans Day, a special celebration that honors the principal who opened the school in the 1950s.”

Mrs. Gamble notes that the PTA relies on help from retirees like her. “The mothers of these children have jobs,” she says. “I live in the neighborhood. Since I worked at the school and know what kind of help they need, I’m happy to stay busy. It’s important to make life a little better for the students and teachers.” ■

## Valor Academy of Leadership

When Valor Academy opened its doors on Soutel Drive in the fall of 2014, the public charter school for boys had been in the planning stages for nearly five years. Discussions began in 2009 with a symposium at Jacksonville's downtown library. The event drew more than 500 people, many of them families who were exploring alternatives to traditional public school education for their sons. "A Schott Foundation report issued that year became the focus of our meeting," says Tunji Williams, who heads the nonprofit organization that founded Valor Academy and its sister school, Virtue Arts & Science Academy for girls. "We explored 13 themes related to educating minority students. One of the ideas that stood out was single-gender schools. For some students, especially African-American males, an all-boys school has clear advantages. It plays to their strengths as team learners, removes the distraction of girls, and helps channel competitiveness in positive

ways. Another plus is that we can use gender-specific themes in our character building exercises."

The concept had special appeal for families who were dismayed by the low graduation rate among African-American boys in Duval County public schools. "A graduation rate of 28 percent for young black males is obviously unacceptable," says Valor's principal John Taylor. "We have strategies to help combat learning deficits that lead to dropping out, especially in reading. For one thing, we can offer smaller class sizes. Reading and comprehension skills are taught in every class, no matter the subject. We offer Saturday school and we emphasize peer-to-peer tutoring so that scholars help each other learn. Our students know that it's important to help the man on your right and your left."

Dr. Barbara Darby, a retired campus president of Florida State College at Jacksonville, is a founding member of the school and serves on its board of

directors. "When I was growing up, we had caring adults who looked like us pushing us along," she says. "Role models can make such a difference. Our goal is to create a culture for success where caring and concerned teachers can have an impact. The culture is the foundation of the concept."

Mr. Taylor notes that each school day begins with a character-building session. "Students spend 30 minutes every morning on current events that we tie to SHARP, our core principles and school mantra," says Taylor. "All students learn the importance of being SHARP, as in Self-aware, Humble, Appreciative, Respectful and Persistent. We are creating a brotherhood. Character education is very important throughout the school day."

Now in its second year, Valor Academy serves 240 scholars in grades 6-10, with plans to add 11th and 12th grade over the next two years. For additional information, visit [valoracademyjax.org](http://valoracademyjax.org). ■



l to r: Dr. Barbara Darby,  
Mr. Tunji Williams, Mr. John Taylor



## COLLEGE-BOUND!

**Challenge:** How could the community support high school students in their efforts to apply for college admission and financial aid?

**Solution:** By enlisting the help of caring organizations like The YACHT.

**Progress so far:** In February 2015, The YACHT held a college fair at Ribault High to help students from area high schools explore college options and get practical assistance with the application process.

**Impact:** The fair was hosted at no cost, thanks to the work of 75 volunteers. For participants, especially children who will be the first in their family to go to college, opportunities like this can be life-changing.

**How the project fits into the “Best Students and Schools” vision and strategies:**

- Partnerships with organizations like The YACHT help ensure that all students who care about higher education have access.
- Applying to college is an important first step for students who wish to earn a college degree.
- Productive citizens with higher earning power benefit the community and are more likely to become leaders and job creators.

## TEST DAY BRAIN FOOD

**Challenge:** How could Northwest Jacksonville help urban children perform at their peak on annual testing day?

**Solution:** By treating them to a special breakfast on FCAT morning.

**Progress so far:** On a March morning in 2013, more than 75 adult and student volunteers came together to serve an appetizing, nutritious breakfast for 492 students at Saint Clair Evans Academy. That year, Saint Clair raised its “D” grade to a “C” on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.

**Impact:** For a total outlay of \$500 (about \$1 per student), the community supported St. Clair’s



yearlong effort to improve student performance on the FCAT.

**How the project fits into our larger “Best Students and Schools” vision and strategies:**

- Research shows that “brain food” for breakfast helps children perform better on tests.
- An improved FCAT result proves to children and their parents that they can succeed.
- It also encourages teachers to keep working for continuous improvement.

## RALLIES FOR A HEALTHY SCHOOL YEAR

**Challenge:** How could Northwest Jacksonville help parents get their children off to a healthy and successful school year — and make it convenient?

**Solution:** By holding back-to-school events that offered free health screenings and information and free school supplies.

**Progress so far:** The Sherwood Forest Community Health Fair was held on August 10, 2013, just before the new school year began. It provided free health screenings from Health Department and other providers and free school supplies. More than 75 students and volunteers participated. Also in August 2013, Northeast Florida Community Action Agency hosted a “Back 2 School Safety Jamboree,” with free school supplies for 500 students and the chance for the Health Department and other providers to offer free health screens and share important health, safety and school success information with their families.

**Impact:** At a cost of \$500, The Sherwood Forest event had a big impact on students whose families struggle to access and afford preventive health care and buy school supplies. The larger-scale Back 2 School Safety Jamboree cost \$900 (\$1.80 per child) and helped 500 students get equipped for a successful school year.

**How the project fits into the “Best Students and Schools” vision and strategies:**

- The event alerted parents to vision, hearing and other health issues that could affect success in the new school year. Students who needed follow-up were given information about resources and next steps.
- Children also received free supplies that helped prepare them to go back to school.
- Parents had a great opportunity to show that they — and the community — care about school success.



Mark Lamping  
President, Jacksonville Jaguars

## VISION #5: PRIDE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

### HONORING ELDERLY

**Challenge:** What is the best way to help seniors stay close to home as they age and at the same time, create an asset for the community?

**Solution:** By turning blighted apartments into a 76-unit affordable senior living community that offers on-site support services and is close to medical facilities and public transportation.

**Progress so far:** The design phase of this much-needed project is complete and the building permit is in hand. Northwest Jacksonville CDC is currently seeking financing to begin construction. The project will create 100 construction jobs and five permanent jobs in the community.

**Impact:** Project costs are estimated at \$9 million, with a community financial impact of \$12 million after completion. Value-added benefits are estimated at \$7,900,000 GDP, including \$5,800,000 labor income from jobs generated, \$357,000 in indirect business taxes and \$50,000 in annual property taxes.

**How the project fits into the “Pride in Our Neighborhood” vision and strategies:**

- The new senior center will house the elderly in familiar surroundings close to home and provide peace of mind for their families.
- Neighborhood seniors who do not live in the center will be welcomed for community events and activities.
- Blighted buildings will be transformed into a beautifully landscaped facility with plenty of parking for staff and visitors.

### TOWN CENTER BUILD-OUT

**Challenge:** What is the best way to bring services that residents want and need to Northwest Jacksonville?

## Magnolia Gardens Speaks Up to Combat a Health Hazard

Gadson and Orzola Burgess were young parents when they first moved to Magnolia Gardens in 1954. “We didn’t want our daughters growing up in a cramped and crowded neighborhood,” says Mr. Burgess. “So when I heard that a new subdivision — out in the middle of what used to be a swamp near Edgewood Avenue — was being built, we decided it would be a good move for us.”

The Burgesses have seen many changes since the 1950s. “In the beginning, we didn’t even have streetlights,” says Mrs. Burgess. “Ten or 15 years ago, sidewalks finally went in on the side of

Magnolia Gardens where we live. But the biggest issue, an open ditch between Moncrief Road and Edgewood, had never been solved. We wanted that covered up for as long as I can remember.”

As leaders of their neighborhood association, the Burgesses turned to Paul Tutwiler of Northwest Jacksonville CDC. “We saw how he had transformed a neighborhood off Golfair Boulevard, and we thought maybe he could help us too,” says Mr. Burgess. Tutwiler connected their neighborhood association to 18 other communities in Northwest Jacksonville. “We had big meetings at the Jacksonville Job Corps office to talk about EPIC,” says Mrs. Burgess. “What we learned is that other neighborhoods have a lot in common with us. Through EPIC, we realized that when neighborhoods work together, we have more power. We finally got that ditch covered in 2015. Now we need to continue pushing for a community center. It was supposed to be part of Magnolia Gardens in the beginning, and we still need it for our children and our families.” ■



## Mary Eaves Senior Center



After a delay of several years, a Northwest Jacksonville dream project will break ground in the summer of 2016 at the former site of a crime-ridden apartment complex on West 16th Street. The City of Jacksonville has already cleared the land for the long-awaited Mary Eaves Senior Citizen Housing Center. Located next door to Stanton College Preparatory School, the new housing center will provide independent living apartments for 70 seniors. A recreation area, game room and outdoor patio with tables and grills will be available to residents, their families and senior citizens who live nearby.

Named for Mary Eaves, a founding Northwest Jacksonville CDC board member who spearheaded this effort to help residents “age in place” in the neighborhood they know best, the center will be a gathering spot for the community. “When I was growing up on West 20th Street, this entire neighborhood was residential,” says Mary Eaves.



Mary Eaves

“Now, a lot of people who have lived here for years are too elderly to keep up with their houses. Since there is only one other senior facility in the area, many seniors had to move out of the neighborhood completely. The board felt an urgent need to act.”

The center is almost fully designed, according to Wight Greger, a real estate consultant and former director of the City’s Housing and Neighborhoods Department who is helping NJCDC clear hurdles to completion. “Paul Tutwiler of NJCDC secured Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds and we are now working through the rest of the process,” says Greger. “Financing is through the Multifamily Mortgage Revenue Bond program, issued by the State of Florida. Federal HOME dollars and the Low Income Housing Credits will be part of the loan structure.” The center will be an important piece of a concentrated effort to fight blight in the area. “By replacing apartments that had deteriorated into a hub for criminal activity with a beautifully landscaped center where our elders can live in dignity, we are changing the way people feel and think about the neighborhood,” says Paul Tutwiler. “Our goal is to create positive change without displacing residents as we have seen in other neighborhoods.” ■

**Solution:** By filling all of the tenant spaces in the North Point Town Center on Myrtle and Moncrief.

**Progress so far:** The center opened for business in April 2012. Since then, it has attracted a café, barbershop, shoe store, construction company, videographer, insurance company and pediatric dental clinic sponsored by the City of Jacksonville Health Department. Prospective tenants include a pharmacy and medical laboratory.

**Impact:** The Town Center cost \$4.5 million to build and will have an economic impact of at least \$1 million. Already, it has created 50 construction jobs and 12 new permanent jobs.

**How the project fits into the “Pride in Our Neighborhood” vision and strategies:**

- Convenient goods and services are critical to keeping and attracting residents and businesses.
- Entrepreneurs and minority investors can now see viable investment opportunities.
- The Town Center’s success has led to grants that help fund new businesses at the center.

### CREATING A NEIGHBORHOOD HUB

**Challenge:** How could a community whose commercial corridor was less than vibrant find new reasons to love their neighborhood?

**Solution:** By opening the North Point Café, a coffee shop with free Wi Fi where locals can dine, relax and connect.



**Progress so far:** Residents in the Myrtle/Moncrief area who once had to travel miles for food and fellowship can now walk. Free Wi Fi attracts a wide customer base, including work-at-home professionals, students, JSO officers and more. As the customer base grows, the café will continue to create new jobs for locals.

**Impact:** The project cost \$400,000, with a financial impact of approximately \$500,000 to the community in terms of construction jobs (five) and new permanent restaurant positions (three).

**How the project fits into the “Pride in Our Neighborhood” vision and strategies:**

- Proximity to services is key to keeping residents and attracting new residents.
- Successful small businesses attract more small businesses and financing to build and sustain them.
- The café announces a new era for one of the Jacksonville’s most historic neighborhoods.

### COMMUNITY ART PROJECT

**Challenge:** How could Northwest Jacksonville residents create lasting memories, feel proud of their neighborhood and feel supported by the greater Jacksonville community?

**Solution:** By partnering with HandsOn Jacksonville and United Way of Northeast Jacksonville to create a special event on Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, 2014.

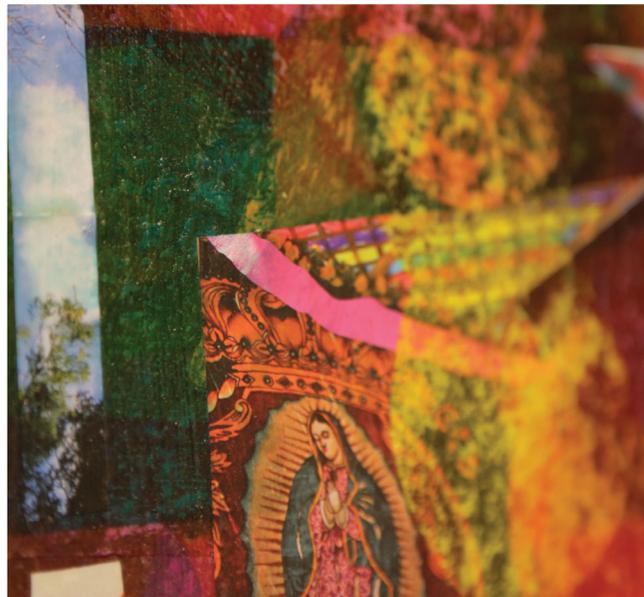
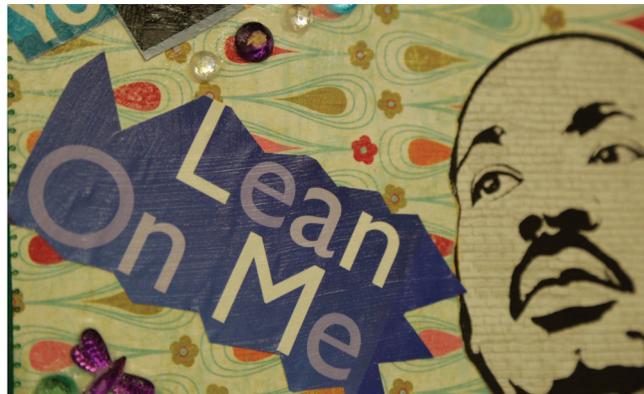
**Progress so far:** With the help of volunteers, more than 250 participants created colorful ceramic “peace” tiles that were later displayed at Northwest Jacksonville Community Development Corporation headquarters. On the same weekend, volunteers distributed more than 7,000 pounds of food to residents.

**Impact:** The peace tile project cost \$500 in supplies. Its benefit is intangible but important

in terms of individual satisfaction and community pride. The food giveaway had a community impact of an estimated \$84,000.

**How the project fits into the “Pride in Our Neighborhood” vision and strategies:**

- The community recruited help from outside resources to accomplish a large-scale task.
- The art project brought residents of many ages together in a side-by-side activity.



- The food giveaway helped individuals and showed the community that others care about their welfare.

### REACHING OUT TO RESOURCES

**Challenge:** How could Northwest Jacksonville secure funding to revitalize a distressed public housing community?

**Solution:** By applying for a federal grant, and in the process, forging relationships with the City.

**Progress so far:** All was not lost when an application submitted by Northwest Jacksonville CDC in 2013 failed to make the cut in a highly competitive federal grant program. As a result of relationships formed during the grant process, the City of Jacksonville and NJCDC are now united in an effort to rehabilitate a large and severely run-down HUD-assisted multi-family housing project. They have also identified additional areas that need immediate attention and are working on ways to fund improvements.

**How the project fits into the “Pride in Our Neighborhood” vision and strategies:**

- Building relationships and partnerships is the best way forward for urban neighborhoods.
- Partnerships with the City put Northwest Jacksonville CDC in better position to advocate for improvements to housing.
- Rehabilitated projects motivate residents and businesses to show pride in their own properties and the neighborhood as a whole.

### SERVING SENIORS

**Challenge:** How could Northwest Jacksonville residents make Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 2014 a memorable and community-building event?

**Solution:** By creating a day of service, with projects that included home maintenance for a 98-year-old neighbor.

**Progress so far:** On Saturday, January 18, 2014, volunteers from Northwest Jacksonville CDC, LISC, United Way of Northeast Florida, HandsOn Jacksonville, Wells Fargo and other organizations joined hands to help a senior in need.

**Impact:** Fifteen United Way volunteers supplied labor. Painting and landscaping supplies cost \$1,100.

**How the project fits into our larger “Pride in Our Neighborhood” vision and strategies:**

- The community recruited help from outside resources to accomplish a large-scale task.
- It preserved a neglected property and helped beautify the Myrtle/Moncrief corridor.
- Cleanups of this kind encourage residents to take pride in their own homes and the neighborhood.

### OLD FLORADALE BEAUTIFICATION AND BLOCK PARTY

**Challenge:** How could a historic community show its pride?

**Solution:** By organizing residents to create welcoming entrance and exit points to showcase the neighborhood.

**Progress so far:** At a festive block party on January 7, 2015, residents of Old Floradale came together to celebrate the completion of a Neighborhood Association project that had rallied the community. Through the efforts of the more than 120 neighborhood association members who planned the project and the 24 working volunteers and five paid workers who executed it, Old Floradale now mark the neighborhood’s boundaries with concrete enclosed signs and beautifully landscaped entrance and exit points.

**Impact:** The project was completed for \$4,731. Its impact on neighborhood pride and cohesiveness will be long-lasting.



**How the project fits into our larger “Pride in Our Neighborhood” vision and strategies:**

- It developed volunteer leadership opportunities on neighborhood association service and planning committees.
- Residents worked together to improve quality of life, demonstrate pride and preserve the history and legacy of their neighborhood.
- Residents are inspired to maintain their own properties.

### SHERWOOD FOREST CLEANUP

**Challenge:** How could neighbors come together to beautiful the neighborhood?

**Solution:** By working through the neighborhood association to organize a volunteer cleanup project.

**The response so far:** In July 2014, more than 40 volunteers showed they cared about their neighbors and the neighborhood by painting houses and manicuring lawns at the residences of 17 senior citizens in Sherwood Forest.

**Impact:** The project’s price tag was \$5,000. Its value to seniors whose properties received a facelift was immeasurable, and it was a source of pride for all.

**How the project fits into our larger “Pride in Our Neighborhood” vision and strategies:**

- It helped demonstrate the advantages of a strong and involved neighborhood association.
- It developed volunteer leadership opportunities on service and planning committees.
- Sprucing up neglected and rundown properties gave residents new pride in their community and motivated them to keep up their own properties.

### HERITAGE MARKERS

**Challenge:** How could one of Jacksonville’s most historic communities create a visible sign of neighborhood pride and a legacy for future generations?

**Solution:** By erecting historical markers that commemorate people and events from Durkeeville’s past and by unveiling them at a memorable event that brought generations of residents together to celebrate.

**The response so far:** In the spring of 2015, residents gathered to unveil new historical markers that celebrate Durkeeville’s legacy as one of Jacksonville’s most historic black neighborhoods. At least eight volunteers and three construction companies participated in the installation.

**Impact:** The project was completed for a total cost of \$5,000. It will impact the neighborhood for generations.

**How the project fits into our larger “Pride in Our Neighborhood” vision and strategies:**

- It helped develop volunteer leadership opportunities for residents who participated on Durkeeville Historical Society committees.
- The markers will educate future generations about Durkeeville pioneers and milestone events.
- In helping to preserve the past, the project built bonds and boosted neighborhood pride.

## MYRTLE AVENUE ENHANCEMENT

**Challenge:** How could an urban neighborhood improve quality of life and celebrate community?

**Solution:** By working through their neighborhood association to install a wrought iron bench and trash receptacle at a bus stop and place caps on historical markers.

**Progress so far:** At least three volunteers and three paid workers worked to complete a beautification project that impacts a historic neighborhood near North Myrtle Avenue. They installed a wrought iron bench and matching waste receptacle on a concrete pad at a busy bus stop and placed cement caps on historic markers throughout the neighborhood. The neighborhood association's next goal is to create neighborhood entry signage with help from the COJ Neighborhoods Department.

**Impact:** The work was completed in December 2014 at a cost of \$1,900. The marker caps helped protect the neighborhood's historical markers from weather and vandalism. The wrought iron bench made life more comfortable for residents who use public transportation. The trash receptacle is helping prevent litter. The bench, waste receptacle and marker caps all help beautify the neighborhood.

**How the project fits into our larger "Pride in Our Neighborhood" vision and strategies:**

- Neighborhood association members who came together to plan and accomplish this quality of life improvement acquired leadership skills.
- By providing better seating for elderly and disabled residents who ride the bus, the bench makes public transportation more accessible for them.
- Improving amenities and protecting historical markers helps boost neighborhood pride.

## RETENTION POND RESCUE

**Challenge:** How could stakeholders work together

to solve a neighborhood problem?

**Solution:** By organizing a cleanup effort for a blighted retention pond.

**Progress so far:** In December 2014, volunteers from the Golfair Estates subdivision gathered to clean debris from an unsightly retention pond and its surrounding area, repair the fence and beautify the entranceway.

**Impact:** At least eight volunteers participated and two paid jobs were created. The total cost was \$3,500. Beyond the benefit of eliminating an eyesore, it allowed the Golfair Estates Homeowners' Association to prove its worth and train leaders for the future.

**How the project fits into our larger "Pride in Our Neighborhood" vision and strategies:**

- It motivated a neighborhood association to enlist the help of community resources to accomplish a large-scale task.
- It eliminated a neighborhood eyesore, creating a sense of pride among residents.
- It increased participation in the neighborhood association, with long-term implications for a better quality of life.

## STARTING AGAIN

**Challenge:** How could neighbors help a senior in need and improve quality of life for all?

**Solution:** By joining forces to demolish and replace an unsightly and structurally unsafe house.

**Progress so far:** More than 15 volunteers helped demolish the house. The elderly disabled veteran who lived there was temporarily relocated to senior housing. Northwest CDC applied for a Brice Grant that will be used to build a new home.

**Impact:** At a cost of \$120,000, the project will create construction jobs and enhance the neighborhood. After the house is completed, the former owner will lease it from Northwest CDC at an affordable rent.

**How the project fits into our larger "Pride in Our Neighborhood" vision and strategies:**

- It enlists the help of outside resources to help solve a neighborhood problem.
- By replacing an eyesore with an attractive structure, by replacing an eyesore with an attractive structure.
- It will be a tangible sign of the advantages of improving unsightly properties in Northwest Jacksonville.

## SOUL CELEBRATION

**Challenge:** How could Northwest Jacksonville raise visibility and celebrate progress at the Myrtle/Moncrief Commercial Corridor?

**Solution:** With colorful, iconic banners and a theme (District of Soul) that celebrates community pride.

**Progress so far:** In the summer of 2015, 100 banners went up along the Myrtle/Moncrief Commercial Corridor. On the banners was an image created in an art contest for children at the Emmett Reed Community Center after-school program. Area residents chose the corridor's new slogan, "District of Soul."

**Impact:** The banners were completed for approximately \$6,500. The effort involved more than 10 volunteers. Producing and installing the banners provided manufacturing and installation jobs.

**How the project fits into our larger "Pride in Our Neighborhood" vision and strategies:**

- The project brought together the COJ Neighborhoods Department, area schools, the AIGA and others for an effort that impacts every resident and business in the district.
- Individual businesses benefit when the visibility of a business district improves.
- Customers from outside the neighborhood can more easily locate the business corridor. ■

## Epilogue

The conversations that launched *Building EPIC Communities* in Northwest Jacksonville in 2012 continue among neighbors, between neighborhoods and in dialogue with government and nonprofit agencies that can help solve problems. A new spirit of engagement is a significant outcome that has positive implications for the future. Residents interviewed for this report frequently mentioned the empowerment that grew from working together toward a goal — and optimism that other challenging tasks can be tackled more efficiently in future.

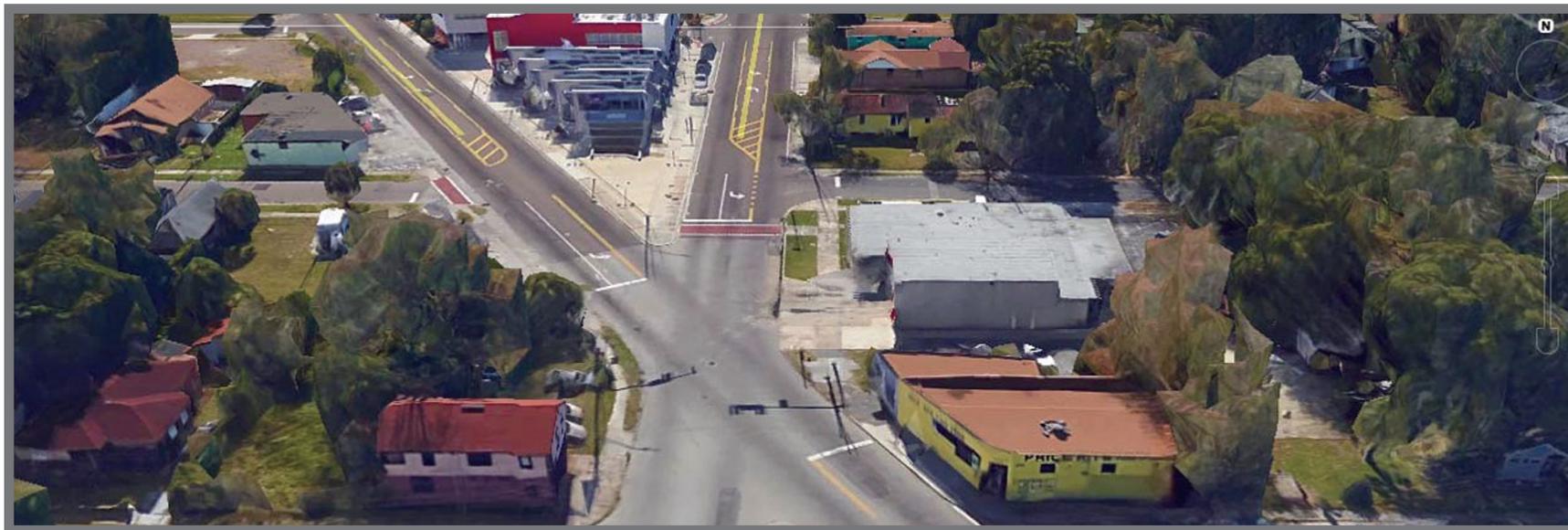
Working together became a common refrain of EPIC. “EPIC taught us that we are the facilitators of the conversation,” says Paul Tutwiler, CEO of the Northwest Jacksonville CDC. In addition to the partnerships described in this report, other joint efforts are in the works. They include:

- Florida’s first Financial Opportunity Center will assist New Town residents with employment and career planning services, financial education and coaching, and access to income support. This important neighborhood

resource is supported by generous private sector contributions. The new center will be highly visible at Kings Road on the Edward Waters College campus.

- A Save-A-Lot supermarket for Phase 2 of the North Point Town Center. The City of Jacksonville is working with Northwest Jacksonville CDC to bring this long-awaited and much-needed amenity to one of the largest “food desert” neighborhoods in the area.
- A Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office substation that will anchor a new commercial building near the North Point Town Center
- A roundabout at Myrtle and Moncrief Avenues, the junction point where Jacksonville’s historic trolley made its turn. This will be an important step toward creating a walkable community around the North Point Town Center.

EPIC illustrated the power of partnerships, and it also revealed the advantages of **focusing on concentrated geographic areas** and **prioritizing residential and commercial development simultaneously**. This redevelopment model creates



“pockets of prosperity,” and has proved successful in other urban core communities, including Peoria, Illinois, where LISC played an active role. “When progress is visible, as opposed to scattergun, it is easier to celebrate and more likely to create a ripple effect that spreads to other neighborhoods,” says LISC Jacksonville’s executive director Janet Owens. Tutwiler and LISC seek to promote a vibrant, walkable neighborhood in the “District of Soul,” a core district of Northwest Jacksonville just outside Downtown. “To get things started,” says Tutwiler, “efforts are focused near the North Point Town Center and the area around Stanton College Preparatory School on West 13<sup>th</sup> Street.” Relevant projects in these areas that are underway or in discussion include:

- The Mary Eaves Senior Citizen Center, previously described in this report
- Payne Street Walk near Stanton. As soon as funding for 12 new single-family homes is finalized, this new, affordably priced subdivision will replace the blighted and crime-ridden apartment complex that formerly stood on a site

that’s adjacent to Stanton.

- A “Rails-to-Trails” S-Line path adjacent to Payne Street to promote walking and bike riding in the neighborhood
- Phase II, North Point Town Center. In addition to a new grocery store for the neighborhood, Phase II will house a 6,000 square foot space for businesses and services, thus continuing to build a commercial node on a long-abandoned business corridor.
- A retail strip at 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Myrtle Avenue that will capture the Stanton “parent market” and encourage residents to walk to services
- A wall of art at Simon-Johnson Park — and possibly the start of an artists colony in that area ■





# Index of Northwest Jacksonville EPIC projects

## Vision 1: Easy to Be Healthy

- Food Desert Makeover
- Neighborhood Health Festival
- Healthy New Moves
- Urban Gardens

## Vision #2: Family Wealth for Generations

- Planning for Brighter Futures
- Nurturing Startups
- No Place Like Home
- Sharing the Wealth
- Building a Better Business Community

## Vision # 3: United and Safe

- Partners in Crime-Stopping
- Disaster Preparedness
- Connecting Residents to Resources

## Vision #4: Best Students and Schools

- Raising Future Leaders
- Test Day Brain Food
- College-Bound!
- Rallies for a Healthy School Yearr

## Vision #5: Pride in Our Neighborhood

- Honoring Elders
- Old Floradale Beautification and Block Party
- Town Center Build-Out
- Sherwood Forest Cleanup
- Creating a Neighborhood Hub
- Heritage Markers
- Playground Possibility
- Myrtle Avenue Enhancement
- Community Art Project
- Retention Pond Rescue
- Reaching Out to Resources
- Starting Again
- Serving Seniors
- Soul Celebration

# LISC JACKSONVILLE

## Local Advisory Board

### J.F. BRYAN IV, CHAIR

The Bryan Group

### MICHELLE BRAUN

Ex-Officio  
President and CEO  
United Way of Northeast Florida

### MICHAEL DREXLER

Managing Director  
Deutsche Bank

### STEVE FISCHER

Executive Vice President & CFO  
EverBank

### SHERRY P. MAGILL, PH.D.

President  
Jessie Ball duPont Fund

### DEBORAH PIERSON

Ex-Officio  
Community Impact Manager  
Bank of AmericaM

### MADELINE SCALES-TAYLOR

Trustee  
The Community  
Foundation for Northeast Florida

### GREGORY B. SMITH

Market President Northeast Florida  
Bank of America Merrill Lynch

### JOHN WHITNER

Regional Private Banking Manager  
Wells Fargo

## Staff

### JANET OWENS

Executive Director

### JAMES COGGIN

Program Officer

### DAVID PIERSON

Fund Development Officer

### WILBER GONZALEZ

Director of Finance

### KATHIE SILVIA

Administrative Assistant

### RICHARD MANSON

LISC National  
Program Vice President

## Credits

- All historic photos courtesy of the Jacksonville Historical Society from their collection
- Photo of Eartha M.M. White courtesy of Clara White Mission
- Writer: Shannon Henderson
- Photographer: Amy Ploss-Samson
- Designer: Eric Beatty

**LISC**  
Jacksonville

10 West Adams Street, Suite 100  
Jacksonville, Florida 32202  
904.353.1300  
www.liscjacksonville.org



# LISC

Jacksonville

10 WEST ADAMS STREET, SUITE 100 • JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202 • 904.353.1300 • [WWW.LISCJACKSONVILLE.ORG](http://WWW.LISCJACKSONVILLE.ORG)