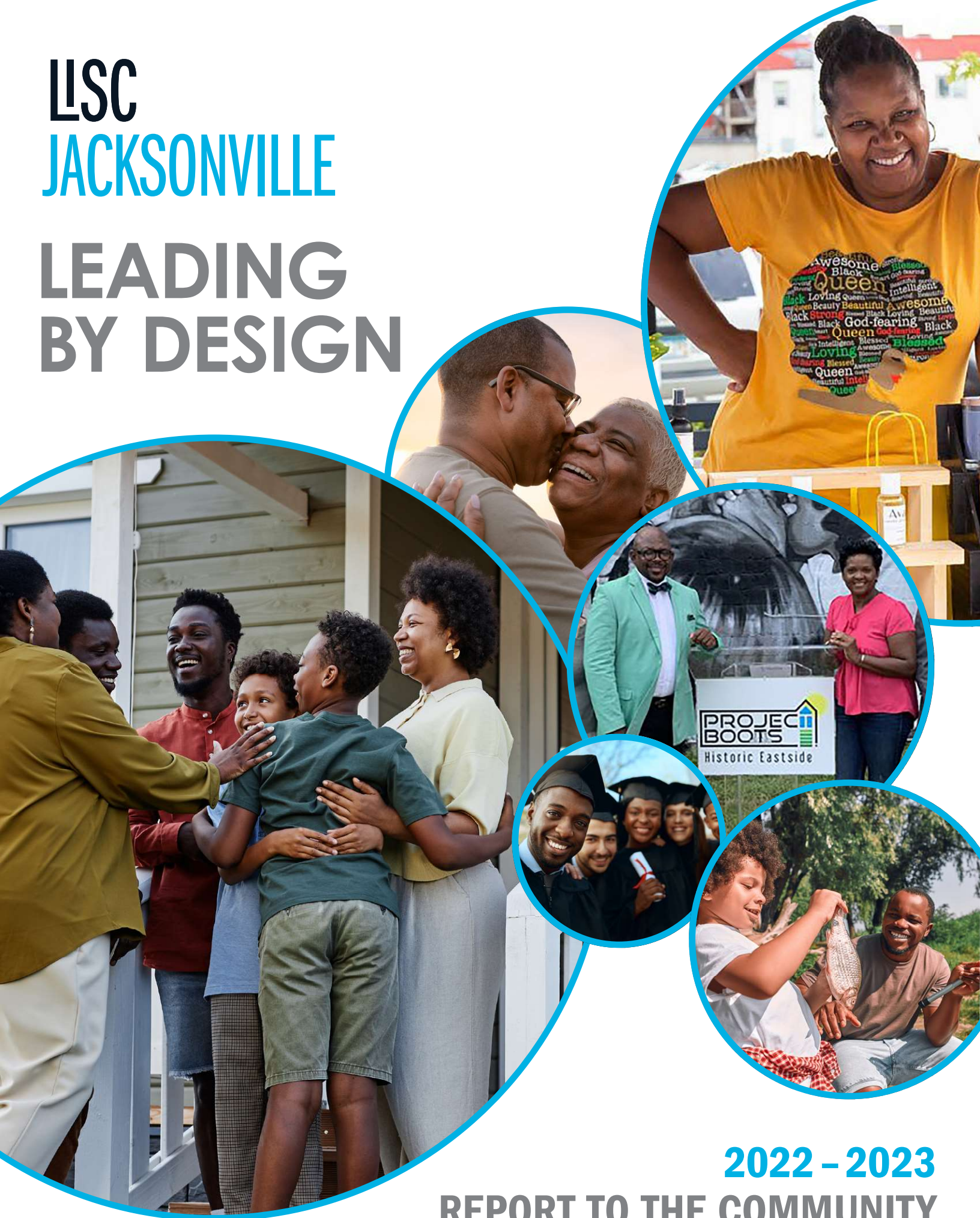


LSC JACKSONVILLE

LEADING BY DESIGN



2022 - 2023

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

LSC
JACKSONVILLE

The **LISC JACKSONVILLE** 2022-2023 report to the community includes the people, places, and perspectives representing a variety of important work aimed at improving Jacksonville’s most challenged communities and providing all residents the opportunity for their communities and their livelihoods to succeed.

Our Stories

Letter from Executive Director and Local Advisory Committee Chair	4
From Surviving to Thriving After COVID-19.	5–6
Small Business Support in Under-Resourced Neighborhoods.	7
Lending Support Helps Advance Urban Renewal	8–9
Creative <i>Placekeeping</i> : Strengthening Communities from Within	10–11
Financial Opportunity Centers Are a Life Program with Life Lessons	12–13
Project Boots Homeownership Program Celebrates Milestones	14–15
Heirs’ Property Work Builds Momentum & Impact.	16–17
Our Results	18
Our Community Development Organizations and Partner Agencies, Local Advisory Committee, Staff, and Donors	19–22



The work of community change is about being bold, courageous, and audacious.

It is also about consistency, despite any social or political headwinds. In the past 25 years, LISC Jacksonville has diligently fulfilled our mission during the tenure of four presidents, five mayors, four governors, countless City Council members, and three executive directors. Despite those significant and institutional changes, our capacity to stand in the gap for our most vulnerable communities has remained consistent.

Our Family Wealth Creation work has evolved and deepened as we adapted to changing market and community conditions. Beginning with our focus on a family's ability to afford housing, to our current emphasis on heirs' property, tax abatement, and property appraisal biases, we have expanded and deepened our emphasis on strengthening family and neighborhood assets necessary to creating healthy places in which to live.

We are also broadening our economic development work in those neighborhoods where we built homes 25 years ago, bringing much needed capital to support the small businesses that make up the economic fabric of these communities.

Our work is increasingly "data-centric," reflecting our donors' desires to ensure we make evidence-based decisions. Currently, we have thriving partnerships with several research institutions, including University of Florida, Auburn University, and the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

The consistent intentionality with which we have gone about our work over the last 25 years has led LISC Jacksonville to help some of our most vulnerable neighborhoods develop much needed stability.

However, we do not intend to rest upon our laurels; we along with our current and emerging partners look forward to raising the bar for our organization for another 25 years.

We are proud of our 25 years of service, and we intend to serve our community for another 25 years and beyond. As economic and social circumstances change, we are certain our processes and tools will adapt and evolve. But our commitment to vulnerable communities and neighborhoods will remain unwavering.

Thank you for being with us on our journey!



Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen
Executive Director



Dr. Sherry Magill
Local Advisory
Committee Chair



From Surviving to Thriving After COVID-19

To help local small businesses stay open and retain jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic, LISC Jacksonville received a \$500,000 grant from Wells Fargo’s Open for Business Fund in late 2020. Twenty-four local businesses received grants ranging from \$5,000-\$20,000, a much needed ‘shot in the arm’ during an extremely difficult situation that, at the time, seemingly had no end in sight.

Just over three years later, those same local businesses not only survived the COVID-19 pandemic, but many have since thrived – despite navigating the long-term, lingering effects of the pandemic and the challenging post-pandemic retail environment.

“To provide financial support to small, primarily minority-owned businesses in both the midst and wake of the pandemic was absolutely necessary, and we are thrilled to see how many of them have come out on the other side even more successful than before,” said LISC Jacksonville Executive Director Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen. “Wells Fargo’s support was essential to this effort and LISC was very grateful to be good stewards of their grant dollars. Ultimately, these funds helped not only the small business grantees, but also the communities they serve and operate in, thrive in our ‘new normal’ after COVID.”

Two of the small business grant recipients included **1 Foxy Lady Café and Catering** and **Little Black Box Baked Goods**.

1 Foxy Lady Café and Catering

Shandon Benjamin-Fox turned her personal passion for healthy, homecooked food into the successful entrepreneurial venture we know today as 1 Foxy Lady Café and Catering, which opened in Historic Springfield in 2018.

“COVID-19 tremendously impacted our catering and pop-up event business; it basically went to zero and that was a huge part of our income,” Benjamin-Fox shared in 2021. “So, we had to find a way to pivot... I wanted to make sure that I was able to keep paying the people who put so much trust in me and our company.”



Benjamin-Fox seized the opportunity to launch several new revenue-generating initiatives during the pandemic, including take-out meals, drop-off catering, and introducing specialty desserts, a spice line, a line of juices, and homemade jams. “All of these things helped keep revenue coming in, alongside our faithful customers. The grant sustained us by helping keep the lights on and by investing in our new initiatives,” added Benjamin-Fox at the time.

Three years later, Benjamin-Fox reflects on the progress she and her team have made. “The grant really gave us the runway space to come out of COVID and helped keep my employees. But just as importantly, the grant helped show me how strong the business model was and that it had room to grow,” she said. While increasing foot traffic to her brick-and-mortar location is still a focus, the catering business has grown far beyond pre-pandemic levels. 1 Foxy Lady Café and Catering has also expanded the previously launched homemade spices and jams during the past three years, and in 2023, became the first Blue Zones-approved restaurant by Blue Zones Jacksonville. Benjamin-Fox also conducts community culinary classes for middle school students and at-risk youth.

As she looks to the future, Benjamin-Fox remains optimistic. “We have been successful by doing what works and sticking to it, and we are so grateful for the support we’ve had during this journey,” she said.



Little Black Box Baked Goods

After leaving her 13-year corporate job in 2013, Crystal Israel took some time off to enjoy her passion for baking. That passion soon evolved into the fast-growing enterprise known today as Little Black Box Baked Goods, which offers baked goods, jams, and preserves made from scratch.

“Prior to COVID, our business was part wholesale/retail and part face-to-face, which was how we’d grown to that point,” shared Israel in 2021. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, “farmer’s markets shut down, there were fewer outlets for sales, and panic set in. We had to seriously ask ourselves, ‘what do we do?’ ‘What does this pivot look like?’”

“The Wells Fargo grant was a lifeline in helping us keep our doors open, get caught up, fix some of the damage that COVID had done... and also look to the future of what I need to do to be able to grow,” she added at the time. While reflecting on her goals for the business, the Open for Business grant helped Israel ramp up production to supply the additional retailers she secured and invest in marketing.

“During the past three years, we have definitely grown in revenue, and the grant was absolutely helpful in positioning us for success both during and after COVID,” Israel shared recently. While she expanded into more retailers during the past



three years and has grown her e-commerce offerings, “we remain laser focused on growth and how to ramp up production to build more inventory. If I can make 5,000 jars of jam, I can sell every single one of them – but the challenge, as a small-batch producer, is being able to produce on that scale, so we are exploring our options. Even 10 years in, I’m still learning new things every day.”

“We are also expanding our e-commerce offerings by partnering with other small businesses to sell their goods on our site so we can help others become job creators as well,” said Israel. “While we are navigating our growth and the challenges that come with it, we are well-positioned for the future.”



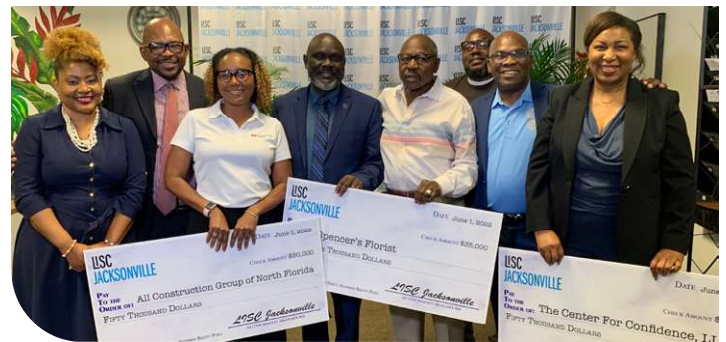


Small Business Support in Under-Resourced Neighborhoods

In June 2022, LISC Jacksonville received a \$1 million grant from the City of Jacksonville to support small business development and growth in Jacksonville’s most under-resourced neighborhoods. The grant specifically supported LISC Jacksonville’s Small Business Equity Fund, an equity investment fund created to empower these small businesses, help them grow, and seed wealth building in challenged neighborhoods.

“Small businesses are the backbone of our local economy, providing necessary employment and wealth-building opportunities, yet access to growth-enabling capital is a perennial issue facing small businesses in our city’s most challenged neighborhoods,” said Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen, executive director of LISC Jacksonville. “These valuable dollars help under-resourced small businesses unlock their potential to grow, scale, create and retain more jobs, and fuel wealth creation.”

Through the grant, LISC Jacksonville’s Small Business Equity Fund directly invested in 22 local businesses representing a variety of industries, including construction, real estate, professional services, retail, and others. Businesses were required to meet specific eligibility criteria, including having under \$2 million in annual revenue, be located in or serve historically under-resourced neighborhoods – the very communities in which LISC Jacksonville operates – and must have been in continuous operation for more than two years in Duval County at the time. Applicants were also required to submit a business growth plan outlining plans for expansion and job creation and provide realistic and promising ideas for leveraging the investment funds.



LISC Jacksonville hosted a press conference on June 1, 2022, at Spencer’s Florist, who was also a grant recipient, on Norwood Avenue to present checks to several small businesses in attendance. Members of Jacksonville’s City Council attended as well.

“LISC Jacksonville is a leader in helping small businesses, particularly those owned and operated by minorities or located in under-resourced neighborhoods, realize greater potential and a brighter future,” said Samuel Newby, who served as Jacksonville City Council President at the time and who played a key role in helping secure the grant for LISC Jacksonville. “LISC helps entrepreneurs’ dreams become reality, yet more importantly, they help fuel an ecosystem of small business investment and uplift our local economy, helping make it more sustainable for the future.”

While providing direct small business support, the additional purpose of the Small Business Equity Fund was to establish and prove the efficacy of this investment equity fund model to enable larger, follow-on funding in the future.



Lending Support Helps Advance Urban Renewal

While LISC Jacksonville has been a leading player in urban core redevelopment for the past 25 years, the organization – through its lending and capital resources – also provides investment support to other local organizations with like-minded missions. One example of these investments is LISC Jacksonville’s loan to Fruit of Barren Trees, an organization founded in 2019 by Durkeeville native Rebecca Johnson focused on developing affordable housing and urban renewal.

“Fruitful things can come from things that are barren,” Johnson told *Jax Today* in May 2023. “What we are trying to do is change the narrative of what’s affordable. We want to think about our lived experiences. All of us need somewhere affordable to live. Instead, there is this stigma that affordable housing is only for people in poverty.”

Starting in Northwest Jacksonville, Johnson and Fruit of Barren Trees are making intentional investment to build housing affordable for working- and middle-class families in the Brentwood, Grand Park, and Moncrief neighborhoods. To accomplish this work, Fruit of Barren Trees itself also needed a place to call home – while also providing an example of what urban renewal can look like.

In 2023, LISC Jacksonville closed on a loan to Fruit of Barren Trees to renovate two existing buildings in Northwest Jacksonville. With anticipated completion in 2024, the space will be home to three rental apartments affordable to families earning 80% of the area median income, office space for small businesses in the community, and a small event space. Fruit of Barren Trees also secured additional funding from local banking institutions to acquire and renovate the 2,800-square-foot building in Moncrief Park.

Johnson told *Jax Today* in May 2023, “For all of the pieces to work together, everybody has to do their part because there is only so far that one person can get. ...The more we have a coexistence and lean into that, I think, that’s how we get it moving forward.”

“We are a unique source in the lending market for projects in urban core neighborhoods where a traditional lender may not be as aggressive,” said Chuck Shealy, real estate and lending program officer for LISC Jacksonville. “Our flexibility helps assure that these types of projects keep moving forward, ultimately enhancing and improving our urban core neighborhoods. Our purpose is not to gentrify, but to revitalize alongside the people who currently live in the community and to maintain affordability for those who want to relocate into these urban communities.”

Through its lending and capital resources, LISC Jacksonville provides the experience and skill needed to address financial gaps that often occur with investment in urban-core neighborhoods. Both nonprofit and for-profit developers can apply for a variety of financial products to support their work, including recoverable grants, construction loans, tax credit opportunities, and others.

“We’re proud of our ability to work with our borrowers to keep impactful redevelopment projects moving forward, despite whatever bumps in the road may come up,” added Shealy. “Our commitment to Jacksonville, our urban core and our city’s most vulnerable neighborhoods is unwavering, and we are able to help solve unforeseen challenges.”

Phoenix Arts & Innovation District



Pictured above: Renderings of the PHX JAX project and The Emerald Station facility in the North Springfield neighborhood.

LISC Jacksonville provided a \$7 million loan to the Phoenix Arts & Innovation District (PHX JAX), a Future of Cities project, to start the first phase of construction on two properties on N. Liberty Street in a designated Opportunity Zone in the North Springfield neighborhood. The first phase will include The Emerald Station, featuring creative offices, community gathering spaces, and a warehouse event facility, as well as The Liberty Building, which will house nearly 18,000 square feet of affordable artist studios, galleries, small format retail, and restaurants. In total, plans for PHX JAX include ten separate properties across 8.3 acres, encompassing a total of 120,000 square feet of adaptively repurposed warehouse spaces.

Union Terminal Warehouse

LISC Jacksonville provided a \$4.5 million loan to help Columbia Ventures acquire Union Terminal Warehouse located at 700 E. Union Street. This is the one of the first Urban Core projects in Jacksonville that attracted capital from outside Jacksonville. The estimated total development cost is \$72 million and project completion is anticipated in Summer 2024.

This historic 109-year-old landmark will be rehabilitated and renovated at the heart of the city's Eastside into 228 workforce-affordable apartments plus 50,000 square feet of commercial space to include artist studios, restaurants, retail and small office space.



\$1.1M FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Community Foundation's first impact investments will expand the inventory of affordable, single-family homes. Then, financial capital is re-invested in the community.

Impact Investing: How It Works

James Coggin and Paul Tutwiler shake hands in front of an affordable rental property The Community Foundation financed for Northwest Jacksonville CDC.

Pictured left: James Coggin, The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, and Paul Tutwiler, Northwest Jacksonville CDC, in front of affordable rental property financed through LISC Jacksonville.

Impact Investment Fund

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida invested \$1.1 million through LISC Jacksonville to advance affordable housing through home ownership, filling a critical gap in the area as rents have risen 31% in one year. LISC will re-loan these funds to local community development corporations (CDCs), many of which are Black-led nonprofit real estate development companies focused on under-served communities. This loan will promote home ownership in the short- and long-term, generating a return that will allow LISC to continue developing housing long into the future. The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida is also guaranteeing payment of loans made by LISC to local CDCs, up to 10% of each loan. This guarantee reduces lender risk on these loans and lowers interest rates charged to CDCs, further expanding access to capital.

These investments are designed to increase access to capital for local CDCs that otherwise might not qualify for loans through traditional lenders. The result is increased capacity of local CDCs to expand inventory of affordable single-family homes in Northeast Florida. Plus, structuring these investments as interest-bearing loans means capital can be re-invested in the community, an approach called impact investing.



Pictured above: U.S. Merchant Marine Presha Mathis outside her family's new rental home. Her mom received a call that she was being forced out of their home. After several months of rental homes and hotels her family was able to find affordable housing through the partnership of LISC Jacksonville, The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, and Northwest Jacksonville CDC.



Creative Placekeeping: Strengthening Communities from Within

Rather than *placemaking*, LISC Jacksonville's approach is about *placekeeping*: by investing in the individuals, businesses, and organizations who call their community home, LISC empowers them to create their own future that honors their neighborhood's past and present.

Through its Creative Placekeeping initiatives, LISC Jacksonville connects community members to the nature and parks around them while also preserving sacred sites across Northeast Florida. The purpose behind creative placekeeping is to enhance social, environmental, and economic resilience and advance community stewardship and activation. This includes amplifying the voices of local community members and the historical significance of their communities to positively impact public decision-making.

LISC Jacksonville's Creative Placekeeping programming centers around three key tenets: connecting people to nature, identifying and preserving sacred sites, and improving access to and sustainability of natural resources.

Thrive Outside Jacksonville: Connecting People to Nature

LISC Jacksonville launched the Ribault Sportsman Association to provide young men with ecological experiences that build their understanding of the native landscape, climate resilience, and environmental stewardship. Programming is conducted in partnership with Sol Margin Fishing & Conservation Foundation, New Town Success Zone, and others.

"Coming out of the pandemic, we recognized that one of the things that's impacting urban core neighborhoods is a lack of access to green space and nature," said Kristopher Smith, community development program officer for LISC Jacksonville. "That triggered our interest in how LISC Jacksonville might catalyze an effort to connect people living in urban communities to nature while enhancing our region's environmental stewardship efforts and resilience to climate change."

"The partnerships formed as a result of this effort have been essential to advancing our broader work, as it catalyzed LISC Jacksonville's recognition of our regional ecosystem and the importance of it, and how other work we're doing in the St. Johns watershed connects to climate and social resilience. There is much more to come," added Smith.





Resilient Ribault: Improving Access & Sustainability of Natural Resources

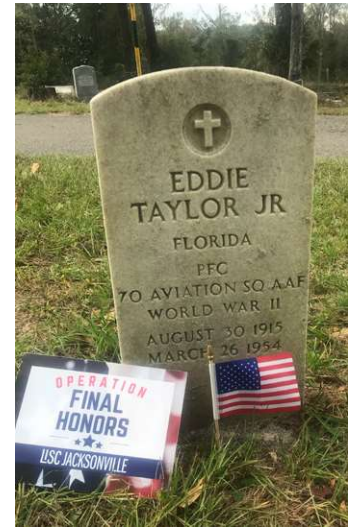
Similar to LISC Jacksonville's Thrive Outside initiative, Resilient Ribault focuses on engaging the broader community around the sustainability and history of Jacksonville's natural resources on the Northside:

Regenerate Ribault & Trout Rivers

Partnering with St. Johns Riverkeeper, the University of North Florida, Jacksonville University, and the City of Jacksonville to increase access, activation, and utilization of Ribault River and its connected parks while supporting and educating area residents about long-term sustainability and flood mitigation.

Oral History Program

In partnership with UNF Africana Studies, this initiative highlights the importance of amplifying and capturing unheard descendant voices as well as encouraging Ribault River area residents to write about their history and experiences with nature.



Overlooked People and Erased Places: Identifying and Preserving Sacred Sites

This important work has focused on four key areas:

Operation Final Honors: Unmarked African American Burial Grounds

Partnering with local organizations to identify and preserve unmarked burial grounds across Northeast Florida and help families of deceased military veterans receive and install headstones from the Dept. of Veterans Affairs.

Nassau County's Gullah-Geechee Burial Grounds

Supporting the Gullah-Geechee Nation's efforts to preserve, access, and maintain in perpetuity sacred burial sites in Nassau County, which are threatened by large-scale development in the area.

Cpl. William Johnson Project

Engaging with Jacksonville University to replace the headstone and develop a commemorative program for Cpl. William Johnson who fled slavery and enlisted in the 33rd United States Colored Troops on January 12, 1863, and made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

Moncrief Cemetery District

Working with the University of Florida and the City of Jacksonville to develop landscape design strategies that will help the community preserve the site and reclaim the narrative.





Financial Opportunity Centers Are a Life Program with Life Lessons

Jennifer James in December 2022. ©Corey Perrine – USA TODAY NETWORK.

On Christmas Day of 2022, Jennifer James’ story of “miracles” appeared on the front page of the *Florida Times-Union*. The year prior, Ms. James had relocated to Jacksonville from Fort Benning, Ga., with her three daughters. What began as a promising family move soon turned into a perilous situation: she lost her job, was running low on finances, and she and her daughters were on the brink of homelessness.

“I was in a dark place I had never been,” she told the *Florida Times-Union*. “Without a job, a single mother and bills including rent that was overwhelming. I was praying for help and holding on to my faith with all I had.”

That’s when her prayers were answered, but not in the way she expected. Her daughter’s school was hosting a resource fair that Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida’s (LSS) Steps 2 Success program was attending, and she was the first person there.

The LSS Steps 2 Success program utilizes the Financial Opportunity Center© (FOC) model pioneered by LISC Jacksonville, which was the first organization to bring LISC’s FOC concept to Florida in 2017. The goal and purpose behind the FOCs is to help families achieve economic stability and build more sustainable communities.

The FOC model incorporates three specific support areas: financial coaching, career coaching, and income supports. Financial education and coaching help clients better understand how to handle their money, including examining savings and spending habits, budgeting, improving credit scores, and other areas. Income supports help clients identify and pursue public benefits and financial support for which they are eligible, while career coaching provides job readiness, employment training, and job search assistance. By leveraging all three ‘legs of the stool,’ clients are able to improve their financial outlook and outcomes while also having generational impacts for the future.

Ms. James told the *Florida Times-Union* that her financial coach, “inspired me and educated me on the how, why, and what to help on my journey. This was something I always wanted but just did not know how, or where to start. My career coach was the kindest, most warm-hearted person. He walked with me throughout this journey.”

Fast forward to Christmas 2022, and Ms. James had a new, well-paying job and had saved enough for the down payment on a house with some additional financial assistance from a friend. But her journey – and the ongoing support and encouragement of the LSS team – hasn’t stopped there.



The FOC at Kingdom Plaza on Jacksonville's westside.

“The LSS team still checks in with me to see how I’m doing!” said Ms. James in December of 2023, more than a year later. “You’d think they’d forget about you, but they don’t. I’m still using the steps I learned and everything my coaches taught me – it’s a life program and life lessons that changed my life.”

Today, Ms. James still owns her home, and she has an “even better job now than last year,” she says. She has also gone back to school for psychology. “It’s really been an amazing year. Sometimes all you need are a few steps to get yourself on the right track. Once that happens, you understand and have that belief in yourself and the confidence that, I can.”

“I’ve always wanted to save, to live better, but sometimes you don’t know if you’ve never been taught,” added Ms. James. “I hope other people understand that there is help available, and I’ve been telling everyone about the program. Sometimes people feel like there’s no help, but there really is a community out there for you. I just want people to know that there are still good people who really do care for people.”

Thanks to FOC model, the LSS Team and ongoing support from Wells Fargo, Ms. James is looking forward to even bigger and brighter future – no matter what comes her way. “I’m not going to stop. Now I know, I can do it!”



The FOC at Kingdom Plaza on Jacksonville's westside.

“I’ve always wanted to save, to live better, but sometimes you don’t know if you’ve never been taught.”

Two New FOCs Serving Jacksonville

During the past two years, LISC Jacksonville has opened two new Financial Opportunity Centers: one in partnership with Operation New Hope, which officially opened in spring 2023, and another in partnership with The Potter’s House Community Development Empowering Center, Inc., located at Kingdom Plaza on Jacksonville’s westside. Both of these FOCs were made possible with funding from Wells Fargo, The Jim Moran Foundation, TD Bank Charitable Foundation, and Bank of America.

Operation New Hope, founded in 1999 to help provide second chances to formerly incarcerated individuals, provides wrap-around care through several programs focused on equipping clients to return to the workforce and become productive citizens. The FOC model also integrates seamlessly into The Potter’s House Community Development Empowering Center, whose mission is to aid, educate, and mentor disadvantaged individuals and families and point them towards a life of self-sufficiency.

LISC Jacksonville is also planning a new FOC in 2024 with Family Foundations, which received a planning grant made possible by Wells Fargo. Family Foundations, founded in 1955, offers tools, skills, support, and solutions for families and individuals to benefit by translating financial knowledge into better financial behaviors.

The FOC network is overseen by LISC Jacksonville Economic Development Program Officer Dr. Melissa Chester, who directly supports a total of six centers.



An Operation New Hope staff member meets with a client.



Project Boots Homeownership Program Celebrates Milestones

LISC Jacksonville launched the Project Boots homeownership program in September 2021, and has since made significant headway in providing homeownership opportunities for families in Jacksonville’s Historic Eastside and northside neighborhoods.

With the financial support of partners including LIFT JAX, Florida Blue, and the Northside Coalition of Jacksonville, the Project Boots program is helping improve the trajectory of Jacksonville’s historically under-resourced communities.

“Our original purpose with Project Boots is to disrupt poverty and change the narrative of these communities, starting with the eastside and northside,” said LISC Jacksonville Executive Director Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen. “Project Boots was created as an investment in these communities and in the homeowners themselves; by doing so, we’re reinvigorating the passion residents feel for their neighborhoods, who will in turn demand more for their neighborhood, helping uplift the community as a whole in the process.”

Project Boots provides down payment assistance and a homeownership training curriculum to participants over the course of 10 months, which also includes meeting a monthly savings requirement. Once they successfully complete the program, which covers financial components of homeownership, maintenance, wealth-creation, and other topics, the participants – all of whom are Jacksonville natives – are able to purchase a new home built on existing vacant lots in LISC-supported neighborhoods.



“Our original purpose with Project Boots is to disrupt poverty and change the narrative of these communities, starting with the eastside and northside.”



“With Project Boots, we are changing the fabric of these communities while improving quality of life for the homeowners, who now have the opportunity to build wealth through homeownership for themselves, their families, and generations to come,” added Cohen. “Homeownership is historically the main way that families have built generational wealth, an opportunity that has been unattainable for too many people of color in our most under-resourced communities for far too long.”

La'Tasha Lewis was the first Project Boots participant to close on her home in the spring of 2023. Built by local developers, The Hardmon Company and In The Word International Ministry, Ms. Lewis's brand-new home, “was a tremendously exciting and rewarding milestone for me,” she said. “The guidance and support provided by LISC Jacksonville and others really helped me understand the process and how I could make this dream a reality. I am so grateful to everyone involved.”

Later in 2023, LISC Jacksonville and its partners broke ground on two more homes in Jacksonville's Historic Eastside, with the final two homes from the first Project Boots cohort anticipated to break ground in early 2024. The organization also helps sustain a Down Payment Assistance Program it launched in partnership with the Northside Coalition of Jacksonville in 2022, which to date has helped seven people purchase homes in the 32208, 32209, 32210, and 32218 zip codes.

“Homeownership is historically the main way that families have built generational wealth.”

LISC's next cohort of Project Boots homeowners are overseen by Dr. Melissa Chester, economic development program officer for LISC Jacksonville, which started on January 13, 2024. “I am extremely excited about our next cohort which will be taking place in Historic Eastside and includes a diverse cross-section of professionals ranging from nonprofit executives to educators and healthcare professionals,” said Chester.

“Our goal is to continue and replicate this program in other neighborhoods that have historically low rates of homeownership, such as Durkeeville, North Riverside, and others,” added Cohen. “Through Project Boots, LISC and its partners are able to collectively help individuals, families, and communities achieve the American Dream and help transform these neighborhoods into destinations and places that people want to be.”





Heirs' Property Work Builds Momentum & Impact

Ever since first identifying the issue of heirs' property or "tangled titles" locally in the summer of 2020, LISC Jacksonville has been leading the community effort to heighten awareness and bolster the capacity of multiple organizations working to solve this issue as part of its focus on Family Wealth Creation.

Since that time, LISC Jacksonville has worked to understand, address, and resolve heirs' property, keep families in their homes, and help preserve or build generational wealth. This important work – which so far has helped more than 130 families obtain clear titles to their homes or develop estate succession plans, preserving more than \$6.4 million in housing value for those families – continues to build momentum.

"During the past four years, we have made notable headway by assembling the right community partners who each have a genuine vested interest in heirs' property from both an individual homeowner and overall community development perspective," said Kristopher Smith, community development program officer for LISC Jacksonville. "Through our collaboration and LISC's investment, we continue to identify opportunities and barriers that partners are experiencing as we ramp up our community's capacity to address and resolve this issue. We have much more work to do, but we are making significant progress, and more organizations in our community have since stepped up in their own ways to further support. We're grateful for our partners' involvement and support during this whole process."

A major part of LISC Jacksonville's focus on heirs' property has been building awareness and capacity among community partners about this issue and arming them with the information, tools, and resources needed to engage their respective constituents. During the past two years, LISC has hosted multiple events with community development corporations (CDCs), local universities and churches, and others to refine how to engage community members in this issue and connect them to legal aid and other resources. One of these events included an Estate Planning Forum, held in partnership with Three Rivers Legal Services and Family Foundations of Northeast Florida, to provide free estate planning assistance to local families.



In October 2023, JPMorgan Chase committed \$500,000 in support of LISC Jacksonville's heirs' property work during the Estate Planning Forum.



“Our mission from the very beginning has been clear: help as many people as possible obtain a clear title to the homes they have rightfully inherited, and ensure they keep those homes in their families for generations to come,” said Smith. “The events we have hosted are examples of the many ways we have been working to not only increase capacity, but make sure that current efforts are as impactful and efficient as possible in reversing this issue locally. We have worked hard to be a leader in this effort, all for very important reasons, and that work is paying off.”

LISC Jacksonville continues to be a thought leader on heirs’ property and has, during the past three years, conducted numerous speaking engagements locally, regionally, and nationally to discuss the issue, the resolve, and how heirs’ property directly relates to many other long-term issues facing under-resourced communities.

“As we look to the future, we will continue to play a leading role in the community discussion, build collaboration and capacity across all partners, and secure additional funding opportunities,” added Smith.

What is Heirs’ Property?

Heirs’ property is property that is inherited by an owner’s descendants without a will, estate plan, or court document from the owner who has passed away, causing unclear or disputed legal title ownership for the descendants. Without a clear legal title, a property’s condition and value are much harder to maintain, and it excludes the household from the ability to obtain home equity loans, homestead exemptions, and receive disaster recovery assistance.

Building Housing Resiliency Through Home Repair

After successfully repairing 101 local homes after Hurricane Irma, LISC Jacksonville has since remained steadfast in helping families make their homes safer and more resilient through home repair programs. During the past two years, LISC Jacksonville alongside North Riverside Community

“Our mission from the very beginning has been clear: help as many people as possible obtain a clear title to the homes they have rightfully inherited.”

Development Corporation (CDC) and Groundwork Jacksonville have established the North Riverside Home Repair Program. The \$950,000 program provides case and construction management and between \$15,000-\$20,000 to repair or remediate walls, roofs, utility systems, and other issues. To date, the program has helped 25 families properly repair or update their homes.

Property Tax Intervention

As part of its focus on Family Wealth Creation, LISC Jacksonville launched a multi-faceted intervention to identify owner-occupied households and provide financial assistance to avert home loss due to tax auction sales. LISC has worked diligently to help these communities and homeowners retain their property rights despite gentrification and investor pressures. To date, 20 homes with a market value of \$2.1 million have been preserved.



Three Rivers Legal Services meets with a client during LISC Jacksonville’s Estate Planning Forum.



LISC Jacksonville's community support covers several community needs, including wealth-building, safe/affordable housing, recreation, crime reduction, community engagement, and economic development.

REVENUE

Our largest funders, the City of Jacksonville and Jesse Ball DuPont Fund, provided

\$3.1 million
in revenue

LISC Jacksonville leveraged that revenue by raising an additional

\$2.7 million

LISC National raised an additional

\$345,000

For a combined total of

\$6.2 million



LENDING

\$23.3+ million
in loans supporting:

- **\$28.9 million** for economic development
- **\$1.3 million** for small business
- **321,660 sq. ft.** of commercial space
- **400+** new jobs created

LENDING SEGMENTS:

50% BIPOC*

63% Small Business

40% Affordable Housing

98% Low-to-Moderate
Income Census Tract

FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER NETWORK



- **1:1** employment coaching, financial coaching, and income support counseling
- **5** Financial Opportunity Center locations
- **1** Center for Entrepreneurial Opportunity location
- **55%** achieved 6–12-month steady job retention
- **38%** of clients increased short-term savings with an average savings of \$5,244
- **72 points** was the average credit score increase for clients



SMALL BUSINESS EQUITY FUND

- \$850,000 in grants to 22 businesses
- 100% BIPOC*
- 100% 1-5 employees
- 75% business revenue under \$250,000
- 25% female-owned

CAPACITY BUILDING / TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



- ✓ **\$3.8 million** in grants to **Community Development Organizations and Partner Agencies**
- ✓ **6 community partners** received technical assistance



HOUSING

382 HOUSING UNITS
82 HOMES REPAIRED

PROJECT BOOTS

- Down payment assistance program to support 7 families with home value of \$1.3 million
- 100% first-time homebuyers
- 100% BIPOC
- 100% female head-of-household

HEIRS' PROPERTY

- 147 litigation cases completed
- 185 Estate Planning cases completed
- \$18.1 million in preserved or stabilized tax-assessed home value



Our Community Development Organizations and Partner Agencies

The work of LISC Jacksonville would not be possible without the involvement and support of our tremendous community partners. We are so grateful for our ability to collaborate and work together to uplift Jacksonville's communities.

- Ability Housing
- Auburn University
- Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry (BEAM)
- Beaver Street Enterprise Center
- Central Fairfax Neighborhood Association
- City of Jacksonville
- Clara White Mission, Inc./Eartha's Farm & Market
- Family Foundations of Northeast Florida, Inc.
- Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
- First Coast Association of Realtist (NAREB Jacksonville)
- Florida Housing Coalition
- Fourth Economy
- Goodwill Industries of North Florida
- Grace and Truth Community Development Corporation
- Greater Community Development Corporation
- Groundwork Jacksonville, Inc.
- Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Historic Eastside Community Development Corporation
- Housing Assistance Council
- Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc.
- Jacksonville Gullah/Geechee Nation Community Development Corporation
- Jacksonville University
- JEA
- LIFT JAX, Inc.
- Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida/Steps 2 Success
- Melanin Market, Inc.
- Metro North Community Development Corporation
- National Consumer Law Center (NCLC)
- New Town Success Zone
- Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida, Inc.
- North Florida Land Trust
- North Riverside Community Development Corporation
- Northeast Florida Community Action Agency
- Northeast Florida Regional Council
- Northwest Jacksonville Community Development Corporation
- Operation New Hope, Inc.
- The Potter's House Community Development Empowering Center
- Rail Yard District Business Council, Inc.
- ReGrid
- Self-Help Credit Union
- SMART North Florida
- Springfield Preservation and Revitalization Council (SPAR)
- St. Johns Riverkeeper, Inc.
- Three Rivers Legal Services
- United Way of Northeast Florida
- University of Florida - Center for Data Solutions
- University of Florida - Florida Institute for Built Environment Resilience
- University of Florida - Levin College of Law Center for Governmental Responsibility
- University of Florida Health at Jacksonville
- University of Florida Shimberg Center for Housing Studies
- University of North Florida
- Urban Institute
- Wealth Watchers, Inc.



Our Local Advisory Committee

Sherry Magill, Ph.D., Chair

Local Advisory Committee Chair

J.F. Bryan, IV, Chair Emeritus

The Bryan Group

Michelle Braun, Ex-Officio

Community Leader

Gregory Anderson

*Vice President Business Development
JAXUSA Partnership*

Chris Crothers

*Director of Impact Investing
Jessie Ball duPont Fund*

Kathryn Hall

*Vice President
J.P. Morgan Private Bank*

Timothy H. Johnson

*Executive Director
Jacksonville Police and Fire Pension Fund*

Ellen Rogers

*Senior Vice President, Market Executive
Bank of America*

Kathleen Shaw

*Senior Vice President, Programs and Initiatives
The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida*

Aundra Wallace

*President
JAXUSA Partnership*

Robert West, Jr., M.Ed.

*Vice President and Community Development
Manager Central & North Florida
TD Bank*

John Whitner

*Regional Private Banking Manager
Wells Fargo*



Our Staff

Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen

Executive Director

Wilber Gonzalez

Director of Finance

Dr. Melissa Noland Chester

Economic Development Program Officer

Linda Leo

Fund Development Officer

John Sapora

Housing Resiliency Program Officer

Chuck Shealy

Real Estate and Lending Program Officer

Kathie Silvia

Assistant Program Officer

Kristopher Smith

Community Development Program Officer

Tiffany Royster

Program Vice President, Southern Region

Our Generous Donors

LISC Jacksonville thanks the following corporations, foundations, and individuals who have contributed to our success.

CATALYST

Anonymous
Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc.
The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida
The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida
Jacksonville Neighborhood Endowment Fund
The Community Foundation Strategy and Capacity Fund
at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida
Florida Blue Foundation
Hearst Foundations
Henry and Lucy Gooding Endowment
J.F. Bryan, IV*
JPMorgan Chase Foundation
Jessie Ball duPont Fund
Michael Ward and Jennifer Glock Foundation
The Siemer Institute
United Way of Northeast Florida
Wells Fargo

GUARANTOR

Community Justice Project, Inc.
DuBow Family Advised Fund**
Edna Sproull Williams Foundation
EverBank
FHLBank Atlanta
Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation
The Jim Moran Foundation
LIFT JAX, Inc.
Macquarie Group Foundation
PNC Foundation
TD Charitable Foundation
Truist Financial Corp.

INVESTOR

The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations
The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida
JPMorgan Chase & Co.
Northern Trust
Pamela Y. Paul
Regions Bank
The Schultz Foundation
The Thomas M. Kirbo and Irene B. Kirbo
Charitable Foundation
Towe Family Fund
VyStar Credit Union

SUSTAINER

David L. and Deborah P. Pierson Advised Fund**
First Federal Bank
The Gate Foundation
Reverend Neely P. Towe
The Reinhold Family Foundation
Ruth and John Whitner
Shannon and Thomas Henderson
Sherry P. Magill, Ph.D.
SouthState Bank
Stuart H. Savedoff

FRIEND

Ana Calise
Donna MacRae
Joe Wolf
John Whitner
Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen
Lanette Hart
Linda Leo
Martha E. Barrett
Michael Read
Michelle Braun
Natasha Graham
Nicole Hall
Sarah Harms
Nicole and Bart Hurley
Padrica Mendez
Stacey Grant
Tyler Lee
Dr. Valencia Dunbar
William O'Dell

PUBLIC PARTNERS

City of Jacksonville
Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA)
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

* J.F. Bryan, IV support also provided through the Henry and Lucy Gooding Endowment (a component fund of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida).

** Provided through The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida

LSC
JACKSONVILLE

LISC JACKSONVILLE

2022 – 2023 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

100 North Laura Street, Suite 600 | Jacksonville, Florida 32202
Telephone: (904) 353-1300 | Fax: (904) 353-1314 | lisc.org/jacksonville