



United Way
of Northeast Florida

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

United Way announces \$1 million homeownership investment

The organization will also convene a new task force on affordable housing

Jacksonville, Fla. (Jan. 11, 2023) – United Way of Northeast Florida announced yesterday a \$1 million investment to protect and increase homeownership in Jacksonville. This funding is the first major allocation of United Way’s historic \$20 million gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott and will be used to support neighborhood-based programs that rehabilitate owner-occupied homes and resolve ownership issues for inherited properties in Lackawanna, Mixon Town and the Historic Eastside.

“We are thrilled for the families whose lives will irrevocably change because of this investment,” said United Way president and CEO Melanie Patz. “With the help of our partners, we’re ensuring residents who have lived in these neighborhoods for decades – or even generations – can safely and sustainably remain in their homes, while taking a critical first step toward building wealth and improving their economic mobility.”

United Way has formed a task force to identify and recommend long-term affordable housing solutions for future investments from the Scott donation. Co-chaired by Mari Kuraishi, president of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, and Aundra Wallace, president of JAXUSA Partnership and United Way board member, the task force is comprised of a diverse group of community leaders, neighborhood partners and housing experts. Members include:

- **Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen**, LISC Jacksonville
- **Chris Crothers**, Jessie Ball duPont Fund
- **Ennis Davis**, Modern Cities, Alfred Benesch & Company
- **Brian Evans**, Fifth Third Bank
- **David Garfunkel**, Lift Jax
- **Mike Herman**, Regency Centers
- **Valerie Jenkins**, Community Volunteer
- **Coley Jones**, Bank of America
- **Gloria McNair**, Groundwork Jacksonville
- **Whitney Meyer**, Jacksonville Jaguars

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- **Shannon Nazworth**, Ability Housing
- **Melanie Patz**, United Way of Northeast Florida
- **Kathleen Shaw**, The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida
- **Darnell Smith**, Florida Blue
- **Diana Sorfleet**, CSX

The task force will convene this week and continue to meet through June, at which time it will present its recommendations to United Way's board of directors.

For now, United Way will invest \$600,000 in a home improvement program operated by Groundwork Jacksonville in partnership with the North Riverside Community Development Corporation (CDC) to support the rehabilitation of owner-occupied homes in the Lackawanna and Mixon Town neighborhoods.

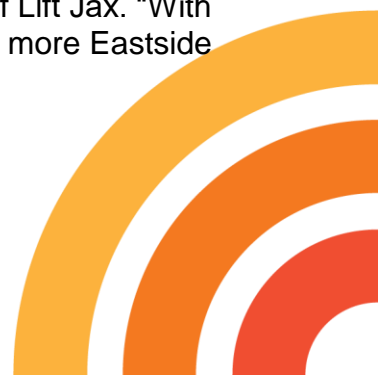
The grant will match an additional \$600,000 in funding to Groundwork Jacksonville from LISC Jacksonville, the Edna Sproull Williams Foundation and Groundwork USA through the Climate Preparedness and Land Restoration Initiative, made possible with funding from the Bezos Earth Fund. Collectively, this will allow the program partners to improve the living conditions, property values and quality of life for families in 46 homes.

"We are incredibly grateful to United Way of Northeast Florida for selecting Groundwork Jacksonville and the North Riverside CDC Home Repair program for this transformational grant," said Kay Ehas, CEO of Groundwork Jacksonville. "This initiative will provide far-reaching benefits to North Riverside and help to protect residents of this economically and environmentally vulnerable neighborhood from the threats of climate and displacement. As we continue our work to restore McCoys Creek and build the Emerald Trail in partnership with the City of Jacksonville, Groundwork is committed to helping long-time residents remain in their homes and begin to build generational wealth for their families."

"The residents of North Riverside are so excited about this program and appreciative to everyone who is making it possible," said second-generation North Riverside resident Padrica Mendez, who serves as secretary of the North Riverside CDC and chair of its housing committee. "We love our neighborhood, and the home repair program will help to ensure we can stay here and continue to build a stronger community."

United Way will invest \$300,000 in the Restore & Repair program operated by the Historic Eastside CDC and Lift Jax, with technical assistance from LISC Jacksonville. The funding will help longtime Eastside residents make improvements to their homes, ensuring they can stay in place and prosper in safe, stable housing in the neighborhood their families have called home for generations.

"Alongside our partners at the Historic Eastside CDC and LISC, the Restore & Repair program has completed more than 25 houses to date," said David Garfunkel, president of Lift Jax. "With the support from United Way, we are looking forward to collaborating with many more Eastside residents this year to ensure safe housing for generations to come."



“We are thankful to United Way, Lift Jax and all of our partners,” said Suzanne Pickett, president and CEO of the Historic Eastside CDC. “This program allows residents to retain their homes as an asset and build wealth for future generations.”

An additional \$100,000 will be provided by United Way to LISC Jacksonville to scale a successful program that creates and preserves homeownership by resolving issues with heirs’ property rights.

Research has shown Jacksonville has the densest concentration of intestate property in the Southeast with more than 29,000 properties at risk. When property is passed down without a legal will, recipients are often lacking a clear title to the home. This can prevent the owners from accessing home improvement loans and disaster assistance and make the owners susceptible to losing the property.

The funding from United Way will support efforts to keep these homes in the hands of their owners, reducing homelessness, building wealth and strengthening the community.

“Our partnership with United Way provides a vital lifeline for the work we are doing to help families in some of our most challenged neighborhoods maintain their homes,” said Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen, executive director of LISC Jacksonville. “It is this type of creativity in terms of fiscal support and meeting people where they are that will allow us to collectively address the issues associated with affordable housing.”

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About United Way of Northeast Florida

Founded in 1924, United Way of Northeast Florida has earned a reputation as a respected and efficient philanthropic organization. United Way envisions a community of opportunity where everyone has hope and can reach their full potential. The organization’s mission is to solve Northeast Florida’s toughest challenges by connecting people, resources and ideas. United Way focuses on improving economic mobility in the following impact areas: basic needs, financial well-being and racial equity. The nonprofit organization’s long tradition of addressing the human-service needs in Duval, Baker, Clay, Nassau and northern St. Johns counties is made possible through the commitment of thousands of volunteers, donors and community partners. To learn more, visit unitedwaynefl.org, or follow United Way of Northeast Florida on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

