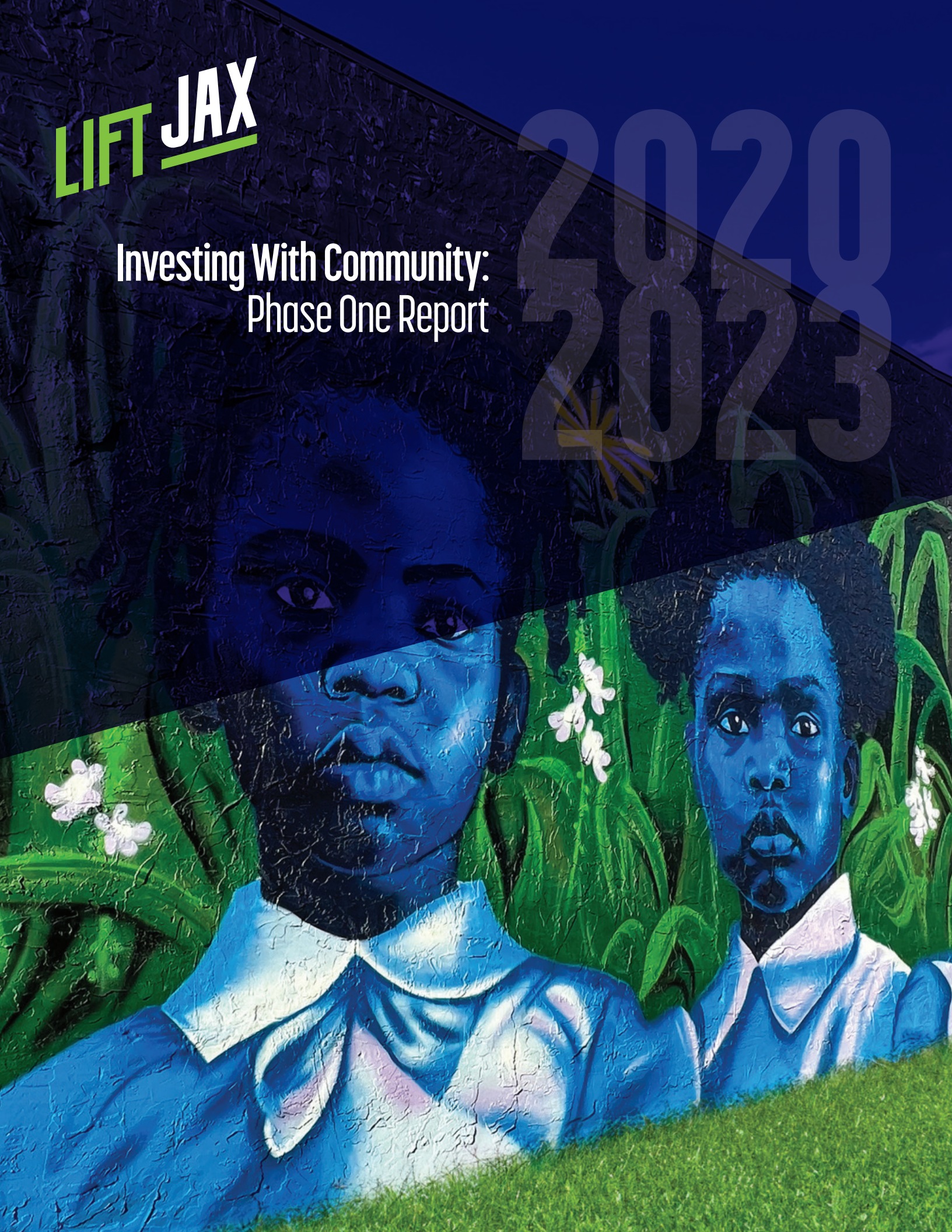


LIFT JAX

**Investing With Community:
Phase One Report**

2020
2023



Together

we can lift up our city.
Our neighborhoods.
Each other.



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Words we live by at LIFT JAX. Words we put into action. Not just by offering direct services and making valuable connections. But through strategic investments in our neighborhoods.

It's our mission to eradicate generational poverty in Jacksonville one neighborhood at a time, with a current focus on the Historic Eastside. But how do we meet this challenge? What is our strategy?

It's simple, really. We believe you can't go into a community and tell people what needs to be done. Instead, we work with the community. Garner input from those who live and work there. Get to know our resident leaders, truly listen, and understand their hopes and aspirations. Then we join forces with residents, advocates, and partners. We come up with a strategic plan and make the financial and personal commitment that leads to systemic change. Along the way, we work to be fully transparent and earn trust.

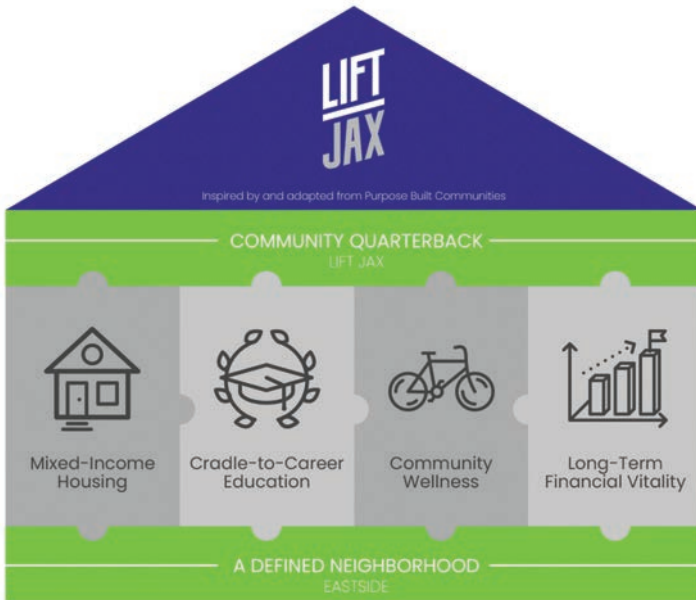
Supporting school leaders. Revitalizing parks and green spaces. Empowering Black business owners. Delivering high-quality housing — this Phase One Investment Report hopes to shine a spotlight on the progress we've made OutEast. But the best is yet to come. We will continue to work alongside residents and community partners so the Eastside can become the flourishing neighborhood we all know it can be.

Of course, there are so many people who have made this positive change and progress possible, including our staff at LIFT JAX, my fellow executive board members, our steering committee, community partners, the City of Jacksonville, and, of course, our key boots on the ground partner, the Historic Eastside Community Development Corporation. I thank you all.

Sincerely,


Darnell Smith, Board Chair

introduction



In the heart of Jacksonville's Eastside community, you'll find LIFT JAX hard at work.

At LIFT JAX, our purpose is to strengthen this vital neighborhood in partnership with its residents to prevent displacement and allow friends, family, and neighbors to live and prosper in the community many have called home for generations. We believe that making strategic investments in both people and place can yield transformational results.

One of the most crucial parts of the efforts by LIFT JAX is partnering with Eastside leaders to deliver on their vision for their own neighborhood. As such, we pride ourselves on working with the community, not doing things to the community, as we strive to cultivate a neighborhood people will continue to proudly call home.

Along the way, we learned an important term from our friends in the Eastside: "withintrification," which means working hand-in-hand with residents to steward revitalization from within the neighborhood itself. This means we can build a brighter future while preserving the cherished heritage of this community.

Why the Historic Eastside? The Eastside is more than just a geographic location; it's a tapestry of history and culture, also known as one of the state's largest historically intact African American neighborhoods. Within these streets, you'll find echoes of the past, from the Boylan-Haven School, one of the first schools in the area serving African American girls, to the Mother Midway A.M.E. Church, the first Black religious organization established in Florida after the Civil War and the oldest A.M.E. congregation in the state.

As you delve into this Phase One Investment Report, you will discover our approach is built on the nationally recognized Purpose Built Communities framework, which entails investments across four key pillars: community wellness, long-term financial vitality, cradle-to-career education, and mixed-income housing. These pillars are the cornerstones we stand on to strengthen the existing neighborhood in a way that prevents displacement and empowers residents to thrive. In this framework, we serve as the Community Quarterback working to bring alignment, coordination and focus to the strategic investments in the neighborhood.



community wellness



◀ Opening in 2024, the revitalized Debs Store will feature fresh food, employment services and financial wellness resources.

At LIFT JAX, community wellness is not just a concept; it's a commitment to enhancing the overall well-being and quality of life for residents of the Eastside, regardless of income levels. We believe true wellness extends beyond physical health, encompassing mental and emotional well-being, social connections, and access to resources that encourage a full life. LIFT JAX is helping to coordinate public and private dollars that will result in approximately \$4.7 million in initial investments under the community wellness pillar.

\$4.7m
invested in
community wellness

Debs Store. Solving for the food desert and beyond.



▲ *The Debs Store served the Eastside community for more than 90 years.*

The Debs Store, an iconic neighborhood market that served the Eastside for more than 90 years, is located at 1478 Florida Avenue. In close partnership with the Debs family, LIFT JAX is embarking on a mission to solve for the food desert challenge that has long impacted this historic community by evolving the Debs Store into a haven for fresh food close to home.

The Debs Store revitalization represents an investment of nearly \$3 million, which enables us to renovate the physical structure and provide the essential resources that Eastside residents have long deserved.

In partnership with Goodwill Industries of North Florida, the Debs Store will be stocked with fresh, affordable food and offer employment services in the office space located upstairs. VyStar Credit Union will play a pivotal role in fostering financial wellness within the community by offering education and banking services and providing a convenient ATM on-site. This multifaceted approach aims to uplift the Eastside in a holistic manner, addressing both immediate needs and long-term prosperity.

This transformative project is the result of a caring collective of key partners that include The Debs Family, the City of Jacksonville, Florida Blue, Goodwill Industries of North Florida, VyStar Credit Union, the Jacksonville Jaguars, Baptist Health, the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, RS&H, and the State of Florida. Together with Eastside leaders, we are bringing back a symbol of neighborhood vitality.



▲ *In 2022, we celebrated the groundbreaking of this monumental project alongside Eastside residents and partners.*



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

Goodwill Industries of North Florida

Goodwill Industries of North Florida is an essential partner in bringing the Debs Store project to life. David Rey, CEO of Goodwill Industries of North Florida, emphasizes the significance of its role in this endeavor: "It is only through the full support and collaboration of our community partners that we at Goodwill are able to take on food insecurity through the Corner at Debs Store OutEast. This is a significantly meaningful project where Goodwill, alongside of LIFT JAX, can act as a catalyst to align businesses, government and nonprofits to achieve a successful community market. In addition to healthy foods, Goodwill is excited to bring all of our educational and employment services to the community through the GoodCareers Center, which will be located on the second floor. A holistic approach is required to revitalize a community and provide individuals the support and access to live, work and thrive OutEast."

This endeavor serves as a testament to the power of partnership, vision, and collective action in creating a brighter, more equitable future for all.

LIFT JAX



► In the heart of the Eastside, children and families celebrated the grand reopening of the playground at Flossie Brunson Eastside Park in 2023.

People have put down roots here in the Eastside for generations.

At LIFT JAX, we believe that vibrant parks and green spaces are the lifeblood of a thriving community. They provide a place for families to come together, children to play, and neighbors to connect. With this universal need in mind, we have undertaken several projects to refresh parks and greenspaces within our beloved Eastside, working with private partners and the City of Jacksonville Parks Department to make nearly \$1.7 million of committed investments.

Flossie Brunson Eastside Park: A Place of Play and Joy

One example of our initiative is the rejuvenation of Flossie Brunson Eastside Park. This park is more than just a recreational space; it's a sanctuary for families and children.

This 7.4-acre park will feature brand-new playground equipment, a baseball field, two basketball courts, and a multi-use field. The new, inclusive playground combines a variety of play structures for children of all abilities between the ages of 2 and 12.

This more than \$1 million investment is made possible through key partnerships with the City of Jacksonville Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department, Historic Eastside CDC, Jacksonville Jaguars, Florida Blue, the Chartrand family, and Friends of Jax Playgrounds. Our collective efforts are transforming this park into a place of wonder and adventure.

\$1.7m

committed investments:



◀ *By making our parks more accessible and accommodating, we aim to create a welcoming space where the entire Eastside community can come together to enjoy the beauty of nature and the richness of our shared heritage.*

Renovations to A. Philip Randolph Heritage Park: Commitment takes root.

Our commitment to enhancing greenspaces also extends to A. Philip Randolph Heritage Park. The improvements here will include paving trails, upgrading the amphitheater area, adding shaded stage seating, and implementing ADA upgrades. These enhancements are designed to transform A. Philip Randolph Heritage Park into a hub for health, wellness, and cultural engagement. By making our parks more accessible and accommodating, we aim to create a welcoming space where the entire Eastside community can come together to enjoy the beauty of nature and the richness of our shared heritage.



A Voice from the Community: Mary Bishop, JaxPAL

Executive Director of the Police Athletic League of Jacksonville (JaxPAL) Mary Bishop shares her perspective on the playground renovation:

“JaxPAL and the youth of JaxPAL Eastside are beyond grateful for the new playground equipment. This has given the youth a safe place to play and engage with friends and family.”

Mary’s words capture the essence of our goal: to create spaces that nurture the potential of our community’s children and offer opportunities for families to bond and thrive.



► *The Melanin Market occurs several times each year to support minority-owned businesses, nonprofit organizations and artists throughout the Southeast United States.*

Melanin Market: Empowering Black-Owned Businesses

The Melanin Market encourages the growth of Black-owned small businesses, creating economic opportunities within our community. By supporting hundreds of Black entrepreneurs at several events throughout the year, the Melanin Market serves as a catalyst for economic empowerment.

LIFT JAX is proud to play a role in this movement by providing support to the Melanin Market. For example, we assist in marketing efforts through training and crafting materials such as press release announcements and engaging social media content. Together, we foster a more prosperous environment for Black business owners.

“I think it’s fantastic that LIFT JAX is supporting The Melanin Market. It’s so important to promote diversity and inclusion in our communities, and supporting Black-owned businesses and entrepreneurs is a great way to do that.”

-Dawn Curling, President of Melanin Market INC

long-term financial vitality

At LIFT JAX, long-term financial vitality means recognizing that sustainable change requires more than immediate assistance; it means equipping individuals with the knowledge and resources to build generational wealth. To improve the neighborhood’s financial vitality, we’re supporting small businesses, providing training to help individuals build careers, and making investments to revitalize our commercial corridor.

Photo courtesy of Melanin Market and Black Jax Connect.



► *More than 85% of Construction Ready graduates gained and retained employment following the program.*

Construction Ready: Building a Path to Success

We're also partnering with Construction Ready, alongside the Jacksonville Jaguars and United Way of Northeast Florida, to prepare OutEast residents for construction careers. The program offers free training to individuals seeking to acquire valuable construction skills and ultimately, a well-paying career. This partnership has already yielded remarkable results, with 31 program graduates between October 2022 and March 2023 and a total of six classes conducted since early 2022. We take pride in our role in recruiting Eastside residents for this program, creating meaningful job opportunities and offering an important step toward financial security.

Revitalizing the Commercial Corridor through Placemaking

The concept of placemaking is not just about revitalizing physical spaces; it's about fostering a sense of belonging, identity, and pride within a community. One way to achieve this is to strengthen the business corridor OutEast and provide a solid foundation for growth and sustainability. In partnership with the Eastside Legacy Business Council (ELBC), these investments enhance the look and feel of 10 blocks of the A. Philip Randolph business corridor.

We sought to create a more welcoming and aesthetically pleasing atmosphere that would attract both residents and

visitors through the creation of six captivating new murals, thanks to more than 35 volunteers. These murals not only added a touch of artistic flair to the neighborhood but also told the stories of the local community, its history, and its aspirations.

These murals would not have been possible without partners and artists, including the Jacksonville Jaguars, Florida Blue, CSX, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, Eastside residents, Jax Wall Project, placemaking expert Kady Yellow, Zulu Painter, Chris Clark, Jarret Walker, and Tatiana Kitchen.

Additional placemaking projects include plans to improve signage and lighting in the area. These enhancements aim to increase safety, provide a better sense of direction for visitors, and create a more inviting ambiance for businesses and their customers.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT: ELBC

The Eastside Legacy Business Council's (ELBC) purpose is to promote economic vitality and revitalization for businesses in the Eastside. The Eastside was once a thriving community for African Americans with businesses stretching at least eight city blocks on both sides of the street. ELBC aspires to return the business corridor to that thriving community it once was. By transforming the now empty lots into flourishing businesses, dollars are recirculated in the local community, benefiting business owners and residents. LIFT JAX is proud to support the ELBC in its mission and its growth. In fact, since the ELBC was founded by just two members, the organization has grown to include 15 voting members and many volunteers.

"The future looks very promising," said Avery McKnight, President of the ELBC. "In the next five years, I envision buildings going up in the sparse areas and vacant buildings properly managed and occupied. We will be the center of attraction with our rich history followed by decades of neglect, and the resiliency to prevail with the community intact."



We believe every child should be given the education, support, and resources to reach their full potential. Setting children up for success in life starts from when they are very young and continues into adulthood. It's why we work to provide superior education opportunities that ensure student growth, learning, and achievement at every level.

cradle-to-career education



► In 2022, 92% of John Love Early Learning Center graduates were kindergarten ready.

Success in life starts early: John Love Early Learning Center

As part of the cradle-to-career education pillar, we have formed a strong partnership with Duval County Public Schools, focusing on prioritizing early learning and increasing enrollment in high-quality pre-K programs. We are particularly focused on achieving this through the newly established John Love Early Learning Center, a best-in-class early education center located in the heart of the Eastside. John Love is the District's only facility dedicated exclusively to serving 3- and 4-year-old children. The center equips young students with the necessary tools and skills for a successful transition to kindergarten.

92%

of graduates were
kindergarten ready

A successful career STEMs from better education.

Another part of our educational pillar is our STEM Pathways Program. This exciting program aims to empower and prepare students for successful careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. We're supporting STEM programming through the education pipeline by turning Long Branch and Matthew Gilbert Elementary into STEM Pathway Schools. What's more, we are directing extra funding toward the enhancement of existing STEM programs at Andrew Jackson, aiming to further develop and strengthen them.

Photo courtesy of Duval County Public Schools



▶ Long Branch Elementary School is located on Franklin Street just minutes from the Eastside.

“LIFT JAX has been instrumental in the success of Long Branch Elementary. We have been recognized at the district and regional level for our growth and performance. Part of this success is due to the Eastside Institute of Technology STEM program that provides opportunities for academic growth for students. The STEM program also serves as a tool to recruit and retain the best teachers.”

-Dr. Wayman Franklin Graham II, Principal of Long Branch Elementary School

Working with the community to address their educational needs.

At LIFT JAX, we will continue to work with school leaders to understand their priorities. By listening to community, we can identify the specific needs and provide the funding, partnerships, and educational programs to prepare students for career success. And life success.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

John Love Early Learning Center

We actively support John Love Early Learning Center with these goals in mind:

More Kids in Great Pre-K Programs: The center helps get more children into high-quality early education by increasing enrollment and making sure they attend regularly.

Prepping Kids for Kindergarten: Our goal is to equip students with the right tools and skills so they are well-prepared when they start kindergarten. At graduation in 2022, 92% of students leaving John Love were ready for kindergarten.

Close Partnerships: We work closely with the school and the school district to find out what they need and help with funding and partnerships.

“During our first year of programming, LIFT JAX hired a liaison to assist us with recruiting students to attend the school. They were instrumental in securing funding to provide robots and tablets for coding activities, they provided funding for books for students to take home to establish at home libraries and wrote a grant to Sprouts Market for funding to redesign our school garden to make it sustainable. LIFT JAX’s partnership has assisted us in providing resources and educational opportunities for students that we did not have the funding to provide to students at scale.”

-Sonya McSwain, head of John Love school

LIFT JAX

\$15m+
invested

To ensure OutEast residents have a safe, comfortable place to call home, LIFT JAX and its partners are investing more than \$15 million focused on improving living conditions at several apartment complexes, stabilizing existing homeowners and creating a path to homeownership for others. This work is done through a mixed-income strategy, with the belief that the neighborhood can once again provide quality living options for families across the income spectrum.

mixed income

housing



◀ **Angie and Jerome Rogers** have shared their Eastside home for more than 30 years and raised their children OutEast. The Restore & Repair Program helped renovate their home, originally built in 1889, with a new roof and a new ceiling.

Restore & Repair Program. Restoring homes. And hope.

LIFT JAX partnered with the Historic Eastside CDC to launch the Restore and Repair program and has already begun repairing dozens of homes that many families have lived in for generations. These improvements enable legacy homeowners to remain in safe, stable housing.

The Restore & Repair Program is implemented by small, minority-owned contractors, creating a vital channel for economic development. With investments totaling approximately \$800,000 to date, this program has successfully renovated nearly 50 homes, breathing new life into these communities. Looking ahead, we plan to secure additional funding for the restoration of 200 more homes over the next few years. We are also excited about our new partnership with JEA, which complements traditional home repairs with energy efficiency improvements, shoring up the homes and reducing energy consumption.

“[Participating in Restore & Repair] meant the world to me. My house was given to me by my Grandma and was built in 1902. I got a brand-new roof, a new shower and bathroom through the program. It was truly a blessing.”

-John Williams, Restore & Repair Program participant

Project Boots. A giant step in equitable housing.

LIFT JAX and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) Jacksonville partnered to launch Project Boots, a critical program that provides residents the opportunity to own a new home OutEast and participate in homeownership education courses to ensure they are well-prepared for their homeownership journey.

Project Boots focuses on diversifying the community and attracting people with a variety of backgrounds that can make a difference, such as a pharmacist, firefighter, college professor and business owners. These new neighbors aspire to be active members of the OutEast community and serve as role models for the next generation.

With LIFT JAX's investment of \$75,000 in down payment assistance so far, five brand-new homes are underway in the neighborhood, with many more planned for the future.



“Being involved with Project Boots and being part of the first cohort means my family and I are part of what will be a monumental movement for Jacksonville’s Black communities. Through real conversations and lessons, I am better equipped and understand the commitment we are making as new residents in the Historic Eastside Neighborhood. My family will add to the memories of this Historic community, have the opportunity to obtain generational wealth, and build a legacy (no matter how big or small) for the generations after us.”

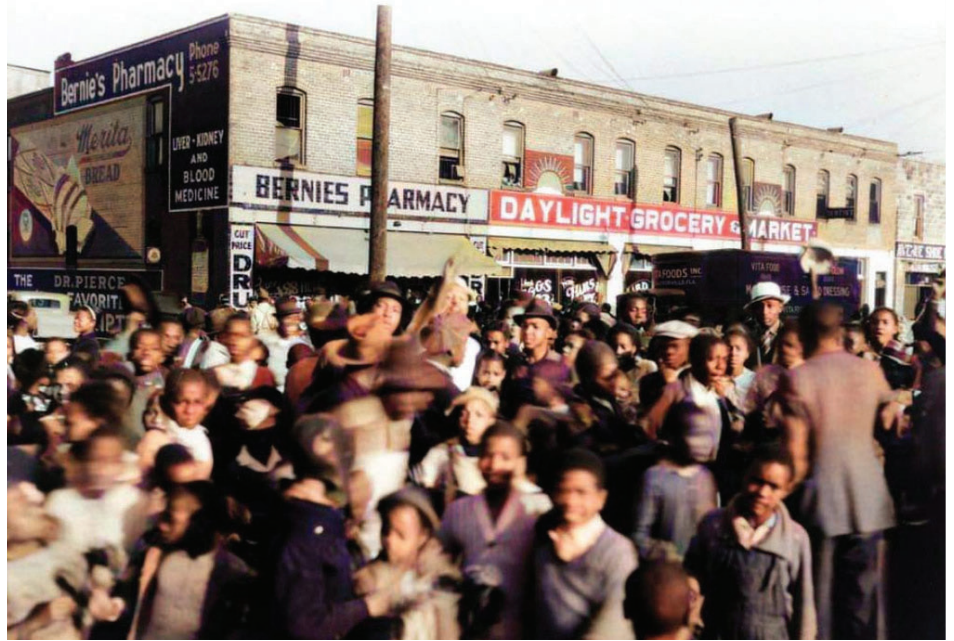
-Ivy Henderson, Project Boots participant

Joined together for more affordable, safe, sanitary housing.

Over the years, we have listened to residents share their needs for safe, stable housing, which led us to our partnership with Joined Development. In collaboration with Joined Development, we invested in the acquisition of Eastside Terrace and Eastside Gardens, addressing safety and sanitation issues. Improvements will prioritize resident safety, including installing security cameras and new lighting, as well as necessary infrastructure improvements to the interior and exterior to ensure comfortable, safe living conditions for all. With a total investment of \$10 million, including \$1.5 million from LIFT JAX, this partnership will dramatically improve living conditions for nearly 100 families and future residents.

Joined Management will manage the properties while our partners from Historic Eastside CDC will provide direct services to residents to meet their various needs. We know there is much work to come to bring these apartments to the standard we strive for, but we are optimistic that alongside Eastside residents, we will make this a welcoming home for generations to come.

The National Register of Historic Places is an official list of historically significant places in the United States, created under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. With its richly documented history, the Historic Eastside has previously attempted to have this history officially recognized. In 2023, Jacksonville's Eastside neighborhood was added to this list with the help of LIFT JAX and funding from the Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation. This designation signifies that the area is historically significant, being at least 50 years old, associated with important events or figures, and having architectural, landscape, or engineering value. Now, the Historic Eastside is documented as one of the largest historically intact African American communities on Florida's register.



Why is this important?

Nearly every other historic African American community in Jacksonville's urban core has been lost to gentrification and displacement. Being listed on the National Register of Historic Places is not just a nice distinction. Being part of the National Register opens opportunities for preservation incentives and ensures the area's place in a public database, securing its history and impact for the future. It's a valuable tool that we have at our disposal to strengthen the existing neighborhood to prevent displacement.



Photos courtesy of University of North Florida and Ritz Theatre & Museum

national register of historic places

looking forward

We hope you have gained a deeper appreciation for the unique and valuable role that the Eastside plays in the cultural mosaic of Jacksonville, and how LIFT JAX is committed to uplifting this community alongside its remarkable residents. There's so much more on the horizon.

In Phase Two of our work, we plan to partner with the Jacksonville Housing Authority to revitalize Downtown East Apartments, formerly known as Franklin Arms, with a goal of introducing a safe, mixed-income housing property just two blocks from the neighborhood's business corridor. We will continue to support school leaders and education, make improvements to parks and greenspaces for more residents to enjoy, and further invest in the development of the Eastside business community.

As we launch new projects and initiatives, we will continue to listen and build relationships with residents, giving us a deeper understanding of their needs. In the spirit of "withinfication," we will work with residents, partners, and businesses, empowering them to prosper in this historic neighborhood.



thank you

LIFT JAX's work in the Historic Eastside would not be possible without the steadfast support of our neighborhood leaders, partners and financial supporters. Your time and generosity not only sustain our efforts but inspire us to reach new heights. Thank you for being a driving force to uphold our mission.

Resident and community stakeholders

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Carolyn Berry | Pastor Christopher McKee |
| Dawn Curling | Avery McKnight |
| Noriko Floyd | Dana Miller |
| Kacheryl "Ms. Cookie" Gantt | Minister Rae Owens |
| Pastor Pearl Graham | Suzanne Pickett |
| Honey Holzendorf | Rev. Dessie Pollard |
| Tia Keitt | Ariane Randolph |
| Alice Kimbrough | Zandria Sampson |

Our financial supporters

LIFT JAX is committed to the highest degree of financial accountability and transparency. Please visit our website, liftjax.org, for detailed financial information and a complete list of our supporters.

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| Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation | Wells Fargo |
| Winston Family Foundation | Friends of Jax Playgrounds |
| Michael Ward and Jennifer Glock Foundation | Bank of America |
| The Chartrand Family | Sprouts Healthy Communities Foundation |
| United Way of Northeast Florida | Kasper Architecture and Development |
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| Jessie Ball duPont Fund | Gunnlaugsson Family Foundation |
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