



Huntsville, AL

Choice Neighborhoods Grantees: City of Huntsville and Huntsville Housing Authority

Target Public Housing Projects: Butler Terrace and Butler Terrace Addition

Target Neighborhood: Mill Creek

Choice Neighborhoods Grant Amount: \$1,300,000

Key Partners: Camiros | Arts Huntsville | WellStone | United Way | Thrive Alabama | North Alabama African American Chamber of Commerce | Alabama A&M University | Boys & Girls Club of North Alabama | Labor Finders | Invent Communities | Huntsville Utilities | Huntsville Police Department | First Baptist Church Huntsville | Family Services Center | Christian Women's Job Corps | Neighborhood Concepts Inc. | Salvation Army | Huntsville Hospital | Calhoun Community College

Project Summary:

The Mill Creek neighborhood has long struggled with a high concentration of poverty and disinvestment but is well-poised to benefit from exciting new assets and the City of Huntsville's strong economy. For decades, the Mill Creek neighborhood's physical landscape has been dominated by five public housing sites that were confined to this area. Over time, a lack of typical private-sector housing and commercial investment limited opportunities and gave way to high rates of vacancy and crime. Meanwhile, the neighborhood had been largely disconnected from the City of Huntsville's thriving economy, much of which is based on the U.S. defense industry and the City's early prominent role in the U.S. space program.

With the award of a \$1,300,000 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant the Mill Creek community seeks to build upon the assets of the neighborhood and bridge the divide between Mill Creek and the broader city. The neighborhood stands to benefit from being a part of a city that hosts the second largest technology and research park in the nation. Mill Creek is located just west of downtown Huntsville, making it proximate to retail, governmental centers, and health care facilities. Critically, the neighborhood is also home to the nation's largest privately-owned arts facility, the Lowe Mill Arts and Entertainment complex, which is located in a former textile mill. With the opening of Lowe Mill in 2004, the area has increasingly become known as a destination for arts, entertainment and cultural events. In addition, the neighborhood is located in a recently designated Opportunity Zone, opening opportunities for future investment.

The City and Huntsville Housing Authority (HHA) will lead the effort to build on this momentum, developing a robust, community-based Transformation Plan. Along with a variety of critical community organizations and residents, key partners include the largest current private-sector housing investor (Invent), a leading nonprofit housing developer (Neighborhood Concepts), a historical university and anchor (Alabama A & M University), Arts Huntsville, and the First Baptist Church of Huntsville. Rather than wait on traditional development interest to shape the community, this team will take the initiative to engage a variety of leading mixed-income housing partners. By leveraging these relationships and resources with the Choice Neighborhoods Planning and Action Grant, the City and HHA will secure the required financial backing, community organizing expertise, and equitable vision to build a model mixed-income, mixed-use community.