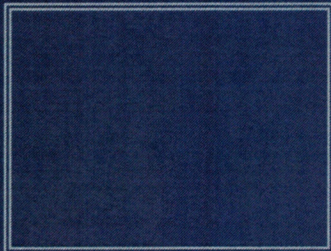
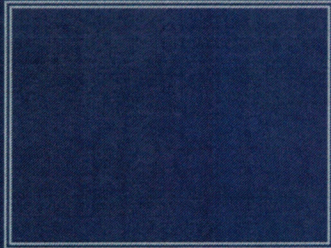
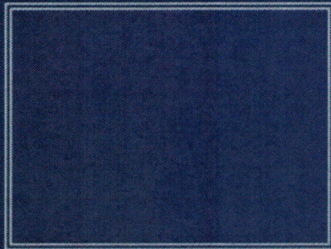

PINEY GROVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, INC.

TERRY MILL COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION PLAN

MAY 2017



PREFACE

In the fall of 2016, Piney Grove Community Development, Inc. (“The Grove CDC”) forged a new partnership with Georgia Communities, Inc. to pursue a long-term vision to bring quality, safe, affordable rental housing to seniors living in the Terry Mill community in southeastern DeKalb County, Georgia. This new residence, which will be known as *Grove Gardens at East Lake*, represents an exciting opportunity to catalyze The Grove CDC’s place-based mission to empower the residents of the Terry Mill community to shape the future of their neighborhood in the midst of dynamic economic and demographic changes.

To that end, and consistent with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs’ policy goals as described in the 2017 Qualified Allocation Plan, The Grove CDC spearheaded the development of *The Terry Mill Community Transformation Plan* (“the Plan”). The Plan was developed in collaboration in partnership with the DeKalb County Office of Senior Affairs, as well as the Metro Atlanta Urban Farm. Georgia Communities, Inc., which is a community-based developer of affordable housing with designation as a Community Housing Development Organization (“CHDO”), is helping advance the strategies contained with The Plan through its innovative *Community Catalyst* funding program.

The purpose of this Plan is to assess current needs in the community, establish priorities for investments through extensive outreach to the community, and establish an implementable strategy for addressing the community’s priorities.

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INTRODUCTION

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The designated target area for the Plan is locally known as the Terry Mill Community and includes portions of five (5) census tracts located within DeKalb County, Georgia, as shown in the map below. The targeted area is strategically located near Interstate 20, immediately adjacent to some of the most rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods in Metropolitan Atlanta, including East Atlanta, Kirkwood, and East Lake.



As the opportunities and pressures associated with Atlanta’s in-town renaissance approach Terry Mill, a community-driven strategy is required to ensure that local residents have access to the opportunities afforded by renewed interest from the outside market. The Terry Mill Community is mainly comprised of minority populations (83%) and has a median income of \$45,215, 33% below the average median income in Metro Atlanta, as shown below.

Terry Mill Census Tract	Median Income	Minority %	% Below Poverty Line
209	\$ 47,840	59%	22%
236.01	\$ 67,919	78%	16%
236.02	\$ 43,935	93%	29%
236.03	\$ 35,388	96%	26%
237	\$ 30,993	89%	19%
AVERAGE	\$ 45,215	83%	22%
Atlanta MSA	\$ 67,200	45%	14%

Despite its historic disadvantages and pending opportunities for redevelopment, the Terry Mill Community has not benefited from a concerted Community Revitalization Plan led by the

local government. Neither has it received the types of investments from the private / nonprofit sector that have proven successful in neighborhoods like East Lake, north of Terry Mill.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

While Terry Mill may not have received substantial outside resources to benefit the community, grassroots efforts from within have successfully addressed critical needs. Serving as the hub for community development initiatives in Terry Mill is Greater Piney Grove Community Development, Inc. ("Grove CDC"), which was established in 1996 to serve local residents. Over its 20-plus years in the community, the Grove CDC has leveraged innovative partnerships to successfully implement a number of programs benefiting Terry Mill residents, including the following:

The Grove Farm

In 2011, the Grove CDC partnered with the Metro Atlanta Urban Farm (MAUF) to develop The Grove Farm, which is a USDA-designated urban farm designed to address the growing need for affordable food among local low-income residents. A number of community development opportunities have been created through The Grove, including training institutes with other communities in Atlanta and participation in American Community Gardening Association events and conferences. The Grove CDC and MAUF have since collaborated to secure several small grants to build farm equipment capacity at the site.

Community Food Pantry

For nearly 20 years, the Grove CDC has partnered with the Atlanta Community Food Bank to establish a highly successful food pantry providing access to food for some of Terry Mill's most vulnerable residents. On an annual basis, the food pantry serves over 5,000 community members with over 80,000 pounds of food. In addition to the bi-weekly food pantry opportunities, the Grove CDC established "drive-through pantries", where another 800-plus individuals were served. The Grove CDC also partners with Wayfield Foods to distribute Thanksgiving Baskets to the community. In 2016, 500 families in the community received baskets.

Dinner And a Movie

The Grove CDC also partners with Averitt Express to serve the local homeless community. Through this outreach event, which takes place on a quarterly basis, The Grove CDC provides food, haircuts, personal care items and clothes to homeless individuals, while showing recently released movies.

Alonzo A. Crim High School Support

Alonzo A. Crim is an Open Campus School in the local community, serving a number of students who are in homeless situations, have been victims of abuse, and are caring for young children. The Grove CDC, through its volunteer network, provides a number of critical resources for these at-risk students, including mentoring, assistance with job fairs, tutoring, and assistance with writing resumes. The Grove CDC also sponsors the onsite daycare program by providing baby food, diapers, clothing, and other necessities that allow students' children to be cared for while they continue their education.

CHALLENGES / ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR STRATEGIES

Despite these and other important accomplishments, The Grove CDC has encountered obstacles that have prevented further gains. To better understand and assess these challenges, the Transformation Team engaged The Grove CDC's Board of Directors in a series of collaborative discussions. The descriptions below provide a summary of major challenges The Grove CDC has encountered.

Affordable Senior Housing

Since its inception in 1996, The Grove CDC has set the creation of affordable senior housing as a core priority. Despite multiple attempts, The Grove CDC and its housing partners have not been able to secure the necessary financing to address this critical need in Terry Mill. Most recently, The Grove CDC was able to secure a sizable donation of land, but was unable to secure the federal funding it sought to develop an assisted living community.

Maintenance of The Grove Farm

Despite the considerable accomplishment of establishing The Grove Farm, a lack of financial and staffing resources are threatening the long-term viability of this important asset in the Terry Mill community. The Grove Farm, which does not have sufficient resources to secure an experienced farm manager, must rely on the help of volunteers to keep the farm operational. However, finding volunteers who have the requisite experience, time and dedication to invest in the farm has proven to be a considerable challenge. As a result, the land has not been fully utilized, and additional funding is needed for new equipment.

Farmer's Market

The Grove CDC's vision was to leverage The Grove Farm to offer an onsite farmer's market, where other urban farmers could sell healthy produce to Terry Mill residents. Although initially successful in drawing a number of vendors to participate, slowly their number dwindled due to low sales. The Grove CDC found that Terry Mill residents, while excited about the market and the health benefits associated with it, felt that they could not afford to buy locally grown produce on a consistent basis.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SUMMARY OF OUTREACH EFFORTS

The Grove CDC partnered with the DeKalb County Office of Senior Affairs (“DeKalb Senior Affairs”) to organize community-wide forums to further understand the challenges and opportunities that would inform the Transformation Plan. The Office of Senior Affairs was established in 1999 to serve DeKalb County’s growing and diverse senior citizen population. The office functions as an information and referral resource for seniors and the community, and maintains up-to-date information pertaining to aging trends, service needs and resources. The office also has oversight responsibility for implementation of the Community Plan for Senior Services.

Community Forum 1

The first Community Forum as part of this Plan was held on May 2, 2017 at the South DeKalb Senior Center along the eastern boundary of the Terry Mill community. Extensive outreach efforts leading up to the forum were made by both The Grove CDC and DeKalb Senior Affairs in order to gain broad participation. Announcements and flyers were provided at both the Senior Center and Piney Grove Baptist Church for two weeks prior to the event. In addition, The Grove CDC created a color advertisement for the forum that ran in the print and online versions of *On Common Ground News*, which is published for DeKalb County residents. These materials can be found within Exhibit A to this plan.

The Grove CDC and DeKalb Senior Affairs coordinated closely to make sure that the meeting was highly accessible and solicited thoughtful feedback that could directly inform the Plan’s strategies. It was decided that structured focus groups with 15-20 individuals per group would allow the Transformation Team to most effectively engage participants. Focus groups are designed to be dynamic discussions that allow facilitators to quickly gain a deep understanding of the key issues facing the community. Through the focus group format, facilitators are able to understand sensitivities and ask targeted follow-up questions that have proven to be limitations in quantitative surveys. Additionally, the format was deemed to be more user-friendly for seniors with a disability.

To maximize the effectiveness of the focus groups, The Grove CDC and DeKalb Senior Affairs worked together to create a Focus Group Guide with a framework for the topics that should be covered. The Focus Group Guides for both community forums can be found in Exhibit C of this document.

Community Forum 2

The Grove CDC and DeKalb Senior Affairs held a follow-up Community Forum on May 15, 2017 to build off the considerable successes of the initial forum. The forum was also widely advertised through flyers available at the Senior Center and Piney Grove Baptist Church, and through targeted announcements made by leaders of those organizations. The second forum was divided into two parts, with the initial component comprised of focus groups identical in structure to the first forum but covering additional issues not addressed in the first session. The second component of this forum included a 15-question survey. Volunteers from The Grove CDC and DeKalb Senior Affairs assisted many of the seniors in completing the survey. A copy of the survey instrument is provided as Exhibit D. The second forum was also held in the large meeting room at the South DeKalb Senior Center.

FOCUS GROUP AND SURVEY ANALYSIS

Focus Group Findings

The focus group guide was designed to understand the current experiences and ability to access critical resources for seniors living in the Terry Mill community. These issues were explored for the following four categories: 1) General Community Experiences 2) Housing 3) Healthy Living and 4) Transportation. Provided below is an analysis of the community's feedback for each of the components.

General Community Experiences

Community members expressed a high level of pride in the Terry Mill community and were well-versed on the local issues facing the community. Residents indicated that living in Terry Mill offered a number of benefits, with proximity to necessities like grocery stores, doctor's offices and transportation options most often cited. Even though very few participants indicated they had been the victim of crime in the neighborhood, the perception that the community was unsafe emerged as the primary concern in focus groups. There was widespread sentiment that there was not enough of a positive police presence in the community. Interestingly, although focus groups were comprised exclusively of seniors, there was much discussion on the need for additional investment into youth development. Participants expressed considerable disappointment in the closing of Terry Mill Elementary, which historically served as a key anchor institution in the community.

Housing

Approximately 75% of participants lived in single-family homes within the community, with the remainder living in multifamily apartments, assisted living centers, and townhomes /

duplexes. Housing affordability was comprehensively viewed as an urgent issue, both for homeowners and renters. Homeowners noted that the ongoing gentrification of the Terry Mill community had caused property taxes to rise considerably, threatening their ability to make payments even in cases where there was no debt payment. Additionally, almost all homeowners expressed a desire to stay in their current home rather than transition out, but most expressed high concern about their ability to care for their home as they age. Many of the participants were familiar with subsidized housing options in the rental market, but expressed doubt that they would be successful given the long waiting lists at current properties in the local market.

Healthy Living

Participants expressed that the lack of dedicated, safe spaces in the community were leading to a less healthy lifestyle than desired. A number of participants indicated that gym memberships were too costly for their budgets, and resorted to walking around the interior of the Senior Center, even though the facility was not designed for these fitness activities. Most seniors reported that they cook their own meals, but do not believe they can afford organic produce. All participants agreed that access to healthy, affordable food is a critical problem in the community. Facilitators also asked targeted questions to understand how the planned Grove Gardens at East Lake senior housing community could better promote access to healthy food. Approximately one-third of participants indicated that they would be interested in gardening if they had access to a community garden. A majority of participants, however, said they would be eager to participate in cooking classes and trainings if convenient. All participants indicated that they would prefer to purchase locally grown rather than store-bought produce, if they could afford it.

Transportation

Participants indicated that recent pedestrian improvements to sidewalks and crossings were very well-received. Most residents felt that they have access to transportation and are pleased with the level of connectivity within the community. Participants indicated, however, that there still was a deficit in the ability to access the outdoors and walk safely to the places they frequently need to go. When asked targeted questions about what they would prioritize, each group indicated that pedestrian improvements should be prioritized over increasing mass transit frequency and alternatives.

Survey Analysis

At the conclusion of the second community forum, The Grove CDC and DeKalb Senior Affairs distributed a survey that was completed by 51 participants. The survey was not intended to achieve statistical significance, but was designed to gain quantitative information to support

the information that was gathered in the focus group sessions. Listed below are the key findings from this engagement:

- 78% of respondents live in a single-family home
- 54% pay less than \$500 per month for rent / mortgage. Only 16% pay more than \$1,000 per month.
- For homeowners, rising taxes / utilities (56%) and home maintenance (27%) were listed as much higher concerns than safety (9%) and accessibility within their homes (6%).
- 72% of homeowners were unaware of any program that would provide them with assistance for home maintenance. 66% said they would definitely participate if they knew about such programs.
- Cost and security, followed by the ability to live in a vibrant community with other seniors, were noted as the most important factors in choosing where to live in the future.
- Similarly, respondents noted that increasing crime and the lack of access to affordable housing were their top concerns for the community, over blight, job opportunities, traffic, access to transportation, gentrification and education.
- Only 28% of respondents reported that their household incomes exceed \$2,000 per month.
- The top three priorities for community improvement were 1) making the community safer 2) helping seniors stay in their own homes and 3) providing more affordable housing.

TRANSFORMATION PLAN

PLAN PRIORITIES

The following Transformation Plan is designed to translate the community's priorities, as articulated in outreach to The Grove CDC Board of Directors and seniors living in the Terry Mill community, into an actionable strategy for making measurable improvements over the next five years. Although there are a host of critical issues to address in the community, this Plan seeks to prioritize certain key challenges and focus resources in those areas in order to make tangible strides for the benefit of the broader community. The section below details these selected challenges, goals associated with addressing the challenge, as well as the solutions and potential resources available.

CHALLENGE #1 – The Terry Mill community has a critical shortage of quality, safe affordable rental housing.

Clearly evident in the outreach to the community is the urgent need to create additional rental housing options that align with the community's top concerns – safety and affordability. As the creation of affordable housing is core to the mission of the community's leading community development entity (The Grove CDC), there is an alignment between demonstrated need and organizational vision that indicates the creation of affordable rental housing should emerge as the top priority. The first policy goal of the Plan is to increase the supply of affordable rental housing.

Goal #1 – Provide 65 to 70 affordable senior rental units that are co-located with critical resources for seniors, like transportation and access to healthy food.

Goal #2 – Provide 80-100 affordable family rental units that are intentionally tied in with resources helping families and young people succeed.

Solution – Successfully acquiring housing tax credits administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs is the most effective means for addressing the listed goals. Efforts should be made to partner with community-minded and highly capable development partners who understand the objectives of the community. The Grove CDC has already initiated a partnership with Georgia Communities, Inc. to apply for housing tax credits to fund the senior community in the 2017 funding round. The community should work to identify potential sites for the family community and apply for additional resources no later than the 2019 funding round.

Resources – Housing tax credits through DCA, federal housing development programs

CHALLENGE #2 – Healthy, locally grown food is not widely accessible to the community due to high costs.

Although an important infrastructure has been established through the creation of The Grove Farm, more strategic planning and resources are needed to ensure that the community benefits from this asset. However, The Grove Farm is uniquely positioned not only to serve the Terry Mill community, but to also serve as a model for integrating locally-grown produce with a proven food pantry to expand its benefits to the broader community. Outreach to the community confirmed both the benefits of healthy food, but also the barriers to access due to cost. The second policy goal of this Plan is to increase access to healthy food in the community.

Goal #1 – Provide access to locally grown foods at The Grove Farm that are at least 10% more affordable than comparable options available in the community.

Goal #2 – Establish a gardening mentoring program that pairs residents of the new senior community with at-risk youth or other vulnerable populations within the community.

Goal #3 – Hold at least four (4) annual cooking and food preparation seminars taught by health and nutrition experts that are available to the Terry Mill community.

Solution – Achieving these goals will involve a process, and will require The Grove CDC to fully leverage existing partnerships and create new partnerships. To that end, it has already secured a new partnership with the Metro Atlanta Urban Farm to expand the existing farm and to integrate dedicated programs to extend the benefits to the community. This will also require The Grove CDC to dedicate staff resources to aggressively pursue funding opportunities available from public and private sources. As a first step, a detailed inventory of grant and other funding programs will be developed to help The Grove Farm address its current need for equipment and staffing.

Resources – Georgia Communities, Inc. has made available dedicated funding to support initiatives prioritized by the community (see Exhibit F). These funds total \$50,000 in grant funds, with the possibility of another \$50,000 in matching funds. To fully activate these funds, The Grove CDC will immediately seek to secure matching funds to help accomplish the listed goals.

CHALLENGE #3 – Rising property taxes and maintenance costs are threatening to force seniors from their homes.

The Grove CDC's outreach efforts confirmed that seniors living in Terry Mill intensely desire to "age-in-place", within their own homes, but feel that they cannot manage the costs and effort associated with maintaining their own homes. With a lack of affordable rental options currently in the community, seniors will continue to be forced entirely out of Terry Mill if

support cannot be provided. As confirmed by the survey, one key gap is that seniors in Terry Mill currently are not aware of resources that may help them address this need. The third policy goal of this Plan is to increase seniors' ability to age-in-place in their own homes.

Goal #1 – Increase awareness of home maintenance resources and funding programs from 28% to 50% by 2018 and 75% by 2019.

Goal #2 – Provide home maintenance support, either through financing or a new volunteer program, for five homeowners by 2018 and 10 homeowners by 2019.

Solution – The first step in accomplishing these goals is to simply educate homeowners on their options. However, given that many seniors in the community are limited physically and may have limited access to online resources, this can be a significant challenge. To address this challenge, The Grove CDC staff will provide an inventory of available resources and initiate a strategy for broadly communicating resources within the community. The new senior community may provide an opportunity to use the computer lab and meeting room to help advance the initiative.

Resources – The Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP), also administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, provides funds to help communities provide home repairs for single family homes. The Grove CDC, as a 501c3 entity, is eligible to participate with an experienced grant administrator. The Grove CDC will immediately begin mobilizing to understand the possibility of utilizing CHIP and other funding programs to advance its goals.

CHALLENGE #4 – There is a pervasive community perception that crime is increasing and the neighborhood is becoming less safe.

Focus group discussions and survey results confirmed that the neighborhood's chief concern – along with the lack of affordable housing options – is crime. A sense of security is fundamental to thriving communities, as crime comprehensively undermines all other community development advancements, including youth development, active living, mobility, and workforce development, to name a few. The fourth policy goal of this Plan is to increase security in the community.

Goal #1 – Reduce perceptions of lack of safety among residents by 10% after the first full year and 25% after two years. Increase satisfaction with police presence to 90% by year two of operations.

Goal #2 – Establish a new Neighborhood Watch network with 25 members in year one (2019), 50 members in year two (2020) and 100 members in year three (2021).

Solution – The critical first step in accomplishing these goals is to begin establishing a deeper relationship between community members and the men and women responsible for policing the neighborhood. The Grove CDC has an extensive track record in forming positive, long-