Transform Westside Summit
Convene | Communicate | Collaborate
Westside Future Fund
Friday, July 17, 2020
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(Pictured from left to right) John Ahmann, Dr. David Thomas, Makeda Johnson, and Winston Taylor candidly discussed "Choosing Chaos or Community?" at the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel at Morehouse College during the Special Juneteenth Edition of the Virtual Transform Westside Summit. View this virtual event recording on YouTube or Facebook  |  Learn more about the King Chapel
VISION

A community Dr. King would be proud to call home.

MISSION

To advance a compassionate approach to neighborhood revitalization that creates a diverse, mixed-income community, improves the quality of life for current and future residents and elevates the Historic Westside’s unique history and culture.

VALUES

Do with the Community, not to the Community
We know that residents are the real experts on the challenges in their community. Therefore, we learn from residents and involve them in all we do.

Be Compassionate
We meet residents where they are in a spirit of empathy and respect.

Have Integrity in Everything
We stand behind all we say and do. We are open, honest, and courageous.

Be Creative
We bring high energy and fresh ideas to tackling the long-standing challenges on the Westside. We’re dedicated to trying different approaches to get different results.

Deliver Results
We’re committed to driving transformation in the long term, with a focus on measurable outcomes today.
Westside Future Fund
CREATING A NEW WESTSIDE FUTURE

Westside Future Fund (WFF) is a nonprofit formed by Atlanta’s public, private and philanthropic partners who believe in the future of Atlanta’s Westside and are committed to helping Historic Westside neighborhoods revitalize and develop into a community Dr. King would be proud to call home.

Engish Avenue • Vine City • Ashview Heights* • Atlanta University Center

Role of the Westside Future Fund
With an emphasis on community retention and a compassionate approach to revitalization, Westside Future Fund is focused on creating a diverse mixed-income community, improving quality of life, and elevating and celebrating the Historic Westside’s unique history and culture.

Impact Areas
Westside Future Fund’s holistic, partner-driven model is proving successful. Through our roles as participator, amplifier, convener, strategist and accelerator, WFF is delivering results in our four impact strategies.

SAFETY & SECURITY
COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELLNESS
MIXED-INCOME COMMUNITIES
CRADLE-TO-CAREER EDUCATION

* Includes Just Us and Historic Booker T. Washington
Investing in a New Westside Future

- Westside Future Fund is deeply committed to community retention
- We created Home on the Westside as a signature initiative in partnership with Mayor Bottoms to drive equitable and inclusive redevelopment in the Historic Westside neighborhoods
- WFF’s community retention guidelines prioritize individuals and families with ties to WFF’s historic neighborhoods to be first in line for housing opportunities and do not discriminate based on income

Using these guidelines, Home on the Westside prioritizes Westside legacy residents by providing high quality, permanently affordable housing opportunities

- Providing renters housing they can afford as area rents continue to rise
  - Renters should not have to pay more than 30% of their gross income on rent
- Enabling homeownership with financial coaching and counseling
- Constructing and renovating new single-family homes, available for purchase and for lease-to-purchase, supported by down payment assistance
- Covering increases in property taxes for qualified legacy homeowners

If you are interested in housing opportunities through Home on the Westside, start by completing an interest form.
A Dedicated Team

John Ahmann
President and CEO

Jaren Abedania
VP of Real Estate

Suzanne Allman
Controller

Rachel Carey
VP of Project Financing

Justin Carr
Director of Strategy and Impact

Brenda Dalton
Chief Operating Officer

Sonia Dawson
Special Assistant to the President & CEO

Lee Harrop
VP of Real Estate Development

Amy Hoilman
Manager of Accounting

Raquel Hudson
Director of Westside Volunteer Corps

Deidre Strickland
Development Manager

Joan Vernon
Director of Neighborhood Engagement

Christal Walker
Staff Accountant

Robyn Washington
Development Coordinator

Elizabeth Wilkes
Program Coordinator

Cristel Williams
Chief Development Officer

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Agenda

7:15AM – 7:30AM
Welcome
Summit Program Review
John Ahmann
President & CEO
Westside Future Fund

COVID-19 Updates
Craig Lucie
Storyteller
Lucie Content

7:30AM – 7:45AM
Opening Devotion
Valerie Williams
President
Atlanta Alumni Association of Booker T. Washington High School

7:45AM – 8:25AM
PANEL DISCUSSION:
Black-Owned Businesses in the MLK Corridor
Hosted at the Russell Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship
Leona Barr-Davenport
President & CEO
Atlanta Business League
Kevin Holt
Co-Founder
H&H Hospitality and Sweetroots
Dr. Mordena Sullen
Dentist and Owner
ML King Dental Center

Featuring special messages from
Tommy Holder
Chairman & CEO
Holder Construction
Yolanda Owens
CEO & Founder
iwi fresh

8:25AM – 8:55AM
Q&A
All viewers can submit questions via social media channels.
Questions will be welcomed for the duration of the program.

8:55AM
Closing Remarks
John Ahmann
President & CEO
Westside Future Fund

9:00AM
Summit Adjourns

@westsidefuturefund
@WFFAtlanta
@westsidefuturefund
westsidefuturefund.org
Our Featured Participants

John Ahmann
President & CEO, Westside Future Fund

For more than 25 years, John Ahmann has been driven by the determination to improve the way communities and institutions function in Atlanta. From his early days working in Washington, D.C. to his positions with private, governmental, and organizational entities in the Atlanta area — including his eight years as an elected school board official in Decatur — he has focused his energy on solving the big problems whose resolutions can ultimately change Atlanta’s trajectory. He has worked primarily behind the scenes, bringing together diverse stakeholders and managing initiatives through to fruition, and has had a hand in some of the region’s most important public policy initiatives and cross-sector collaborations. Along the way, John has built a vast network of individuals who are impacting Atlanta and its future.

John is a native son. He was born at Grady Hospital in Atlanta in 1965, was one of Paideia School’s first graduates in 1983, and earned his BA in Political Science from Emory University in 1987. After having moved to Washington, D.C. and worked for Representative Pat Williams of Montana and then Congressman Ben Jones of Georgia, he entered Yale School of Public Private Management in 1991 and graduated with seven letters of recognition in 1993.

Within months after returning to Atlanta, John was hired by the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games as the Program Coordinator of Government Relations. He was soon promoted to Manager of Federal and State Government Relations where he worked with officials from four federal government offices, including the White House. Following the 1996 Olympic Games, John worked at Edington & Wade, a public affairs firm, and then Georgia’s Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism (GDITT, now the Department of Economic Development), where he led and managed strategic planning teams. From there he moved into GDITT’s newly created position of Deputy Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Research.

In 2000, John was hired by the Metro Atlanta Chamber to serve as its Senior Vice President of Community Development. There he oversaw the Chamber’s initiatives regarding transportation, education, arts and culture, the environment, and legislative affairs. In 2003, John bought the majority interest in a local public affairs firm, and in 2006 he established Ahmann, Inc. While in private practice in 2004, John began his engagement as the outsourced Executive Director of the Atlanta Committee for Progress (ACP), a group of top CEOs and university presidents that advises and supports the mayor on priorities critical to Atlanta’s economic vitality. While with ACP, he was heavily involved in launching the Atlanta Beltline, the acquisition of the Martin Luther King Jr. Personal Collection, the 2015 Renew Atlanta Bond Program, and ACP’s Westside Redevelopment Task Force that lead to the launch of the Westside Future Fund. John is currently the President & CEO of the Westside Future Fund.

John has also been an elected public servant. He won his race for the City Schools of Decatur Board of Education in 2003, was re-elected in 2007 without opposition, and served until 2011. John was the first Paideia School alumni invited to join the Paideia School’s Board of Trustees where he served for four years.

John’s unwavering commitment to Atlanta and deep knowledge of specific areas such as education, economic development, infrastructure and local fiscal policy make him a unique presence in Atlanta’s change landscape. He is honored to serve the board of Westside Future Fund as its President & CEO.
Craig Lucie started Lucie Content to shine a light on the positive things happening in our world and to share compelling stories that resonate with your audience. He has two decades of news experience with multiple EMMY nominations and has won an EMMY for Best News Anchor. He has also received several AP Awards for his reporting and contributed reports to newscasts that have won the prestigious Edward R. Murrow awards. The Georgia Association of Broadcasters also recognized him as the best on-air personality in the state, and the Atlanta Business Chronicle named him as one of the 40 Under 40 recipients. Craig has appeared on ABC’s World News Tonight, CNN, MSNBC, FOX News and HLN. He was recently one of a few journalists invited to have dinner with President Donald Trump in the State Dining Room of The White House while covering a State of the Union Address.

Craig is chairman of the board for the Top Dogg K-9 Foundation which trains service dogs and gives them to our veterans free of charge. For the past few years, Craig has also donated his time at benefits for the Aga Kahn Foundation, March of Dimes, Trees Atlanta, The American Diabetes Association, The Covington Police Fuzz Run, 21st Century Leaders, The Atlanta Broadcast Advertising Club, The Atlanta Press Club to name a few.

Craig has mentored hundreds of college students during his time while anchoring and reporting at WSB, WESH-TV in Orlando, KTBC-TV in Austin, Texas and KZTV in Corpus Christi, Texas. Craig helped them land their first jobs in journalism and loves sharing his knowledge with students to help them craft their stories to keep an audience intrigued.

Craig has reported LIVE during numerous breaking national stories. He was on the ground in Boston shortly after the marathon bombings bringing LIVE reports to Georgia viewers. He also reported LIVE from the floor of The Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia and from the Capitol for The Presidential Inauguration.

Craig graduated from Southern Methodist University majoring in Broadcast Journalism and minoring in Spanish. He also studied abroad in Madrid, Spain. Craig sits on the Atlanta SMU Alumni Board and the SMU Steering Committee which recently helped the school make history by raising more than $1 billion dollars for their Second Century Campaign. Craig is a member of The ONE Group Class, which consists of young professionals helping raise awareness for the JDRF Georgia Chapter.

He is married to his college sweetheart and enjoys spending time with his wife, two kids and dog by exploring Georgia.
Our Featured Participants

Valerie Williams
*President, Atlanta Alumni Association of Booker T. Washington High School*

Valerie Williams is the president of the Atlanta Alumni Association of Booker T. Washington High School, which partners with decades of historic Atlanta alumni, the Atlanta business community, and various local parent organizations to preserve nearly 100 years of Black Atlanta education history. After spending over 30 years in operations management with ATT, Valerie has turned her organizational skills and inner drive for excellence toward historic community preservation. Valerie has tirelessly advocated for all of the Washington feeder schools, assuring the renovation of Brown Middle School; the renaming of John Kennedy Middle School to Hollis Innovation Academy after the Booker T. Washington Class of 1971 alumnus and entrepreneur, Michael Hollis, who founded one of the first Black-owned airlines, Air Atlanta. Valerie helped to rebrand the Washington cluster as a whole, establishing PTAs in every cluster school, and assuring all students and families in the school cluster neighborhoods garnered increased support from across Atlanta.

Valerie serves on several committees including APS’s Target 2021, NRG, Alumni, SPLOST, and Principal Selections. In addition, Valerie belongs to the Community Who Knows (CWK), Washington Cluster Advocacy Group (WCAG), the Westside Community Alliance (WCA), Westside Ready. She is currently the treasurer for the Booker T. Washington High School PTSA and the First VP of the Atlanta Council of PTAs.

A native Atlantan born at Grady Hospital, Valerie started her education at the historic M. Agnes Jones Elementary School and grew to become a proud member of the Booker T. Washington Class of 1982. Valerie holds a BA in Arts and Science from Oglethorpe University. Valerie is the proud parent of one daughter, Rickia L. Willingham.

Tommy Holder
*Chairman & CEO, Holder Construction*

Thomas “Tommy” Holder joined Holder Construction Company in 1976 and held various positions in operations and management before being named Chairman and CEO in 1997. Holder Construction is a national commercial construction services firm that consistently ranks as one of the Nation’s Top 100 Contractors. Since 1960, Holder has operated under the founding principle “Do the kind of job that makes our clients want us to do their next project.” This principle has earned the company over 80 percent repeat client business with some of the world’s leading organizations including UPS, Cisco, VISA, The Coca-Cola Company, Devon Energy and Emory University.

Tommy Holder is married and has two daughters. He is currently serving on the Georgia Tech Foundation Board of Trustees, and continues to be actively involved with his alma mater. He volunteers and is affiliated with a number of organizations including Atlanta Rotary Club, Business Executives for National Security, Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, College of Charleston School of Business -Board of Governors, Georgia Historical Society, Georgia Research Alliance, Woodruff Arts Center, and Westside Future Fund.

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Our Featured Participants

Leona Barr-Davenport
President & CEO, Atlanta Business League

Leona Barr-Davenport is President & CEO of the Atlanta Business League (ABL), Atlanta’s oldest minority business development and advocacy organization. As president, she works with the board of directors to provide increased access to business opportunities for minorities with specific emphasis on the development of businesses owned or operated by African-Americans. Her background combines more than twenty-five (25) years experience in the areas of customer service, program development, organizational management & fund raising for associations and youth oriented programs.

A native of Johnsonville, South Carolina, Leona received a B.S. Degree in Business Administration & Economics from Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina. In 1999, Leona was awarded the inaugural Dean’s Community improvement Scholarship totaling $28,000 in the School of Business Administration by Clark Atlanta University. She completed the requirements for a Master of Business Administration with a Marketing concentration in the Weekend Working Professionals Program in August 2001.

Several organizations have been the beneficiary of her community and civic volunteerism. They include the Southwest Atlanta Youth Business Organization (SWAYBO), Metro-Atlanta Opportunities industrialization Center (OIC), the Atlanta inter-Alumni Council of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), the Voter Education Project, inc., Atlanta Red Cross, Minority Recruitment (2002 Co-Chair); Workforce investment Board for the State of Georgia; Atlanta Development Authority; Clark Atlanta University Community Advisory Board (2002-03 Chair); Workforce Development for Fulton County; Boy Scouts of America and the National Leadership Coalition on Aids. She currently serves as an advisor for SWAYBO and is a previous board member. Subsequent to coming on staff with the Atlanta Business League, Ms. Barr-Davenport served on the ABL Board of Directors.

Ms. Barr-Davenport serves on the Advisory Boards and committees for Business NOW of Goodwill industries of Atlanta, inc.; the Atlanta Coalition of 100 Black Women of Atlanta; the Community Foundation and United Way of Metro Atlanta. Her current board affiliations include Crossroads Community Ministries, Economic Development Corporation of Fulton County; Minority Entrepreneurship Education, inc. (Secretary) and the National Business League. She is a 1999 Leadership Georgia graduate, 2002 Leadership Atlanta graduate and recent graduate of the Diversity Leadership Academy.

In 1997, Leona received the Keeper of the Dream Award from the Golden Neo-Life Diamite (GNLD) Wellness Center and Bradley-Carmack, Inc.; the Ordinary Women with Extraordinary Talents Award from Women Looking Ahead News Magazine, Inc. in 1998; Outstanding SWAYBO Advocate in 1999; the President’s Award from Concerned Black Clergy in 2000; the Community Achievement Award in celebration of the 10th Anniversary of For Sisters Only from WAOK/WVEE Radio; the 2002 Pinnacle Leadership Award from the Fortitude Educational and Cultural Development Foundation, the AIACJUNCF Outstanding Alumnus Award and the Advocacy Award from the National Association of Minority Contractors. in April 2006 Leona was featured in Atlanta Woman Magazine as its Woman of the Year Nominee and was inducted into the 2006 YWCA Academy of Women Achievers.

Leona resides in Sharpsburg, GA, with her husband, Jewel L. Davenport. She is a member of Antioch Baptist Church North where Reverend Kenneth Alexander is pastor.

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Our Featured Participants

Dr. Mordena Sullen
Dentist and Owner, ML King Dental Center

Dr. Mordena Sullen is a third generation Atlanta native. Upon completion of Frederick Douglass High School, she furthered her education at Howard University. While at Howard University, she graduated first in her class of Dental Hygiene. She practiced as a licensed hygienist in Atlanta for one year and later decided to pursue a career as a dentist. Dr. Sullen completed her dental degree at the Medical College of Georgia School of Dentistry. Dr. Sullen then returned to Atlanta and worked as an associate for a few years. She established her own practice in the same community in which she grew up.

Dr. Sullen gives back to her community both at home and abroad. She volunteers regularly with Colgate’s Bright Smiles, Bright Futures program. She has completed several missions trips to Honduras, Kenya, and Jamaica. Dr. Sullen is a member of the National Dental Association, the American Dental Association, the Georgia Dental Association, and the North Georgia Dental Society. She is on the Board of Directors for Atlanta Technical College for both the dental assisting and the dental hygiene programs. She enjoys playing the piano, shopping, working out and reading. She resides with her husband and two daughters.
Kevin Holt

Co-Founder, H&H Hospitality and Sweetroots

Kevin Holt is a proven hospitality entrepreneur who operates in airports across the country. Kevin is the co-founder of H&H Hospitality. He has led the finance and operations of H&H Hospitality, achieving continuous growth in Food & Beverage and expanding the company’s business portfolio. Since 2007, Kevin has led H&H Hospitality from his first restaurant located in Atlanta, to now owning and operating fourteen Food & Beverage locations throughout Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson, Dallas DFW, and Northern-Virginia’s Dulles International airports. The operations include notable brands such as Seattle’s Best Coffee, NYC’s Shake Shack and Bobby’s Burger Palace by celebrity Chef Bobby Flay. H&H Hospitality prides itself on providing world-class experiences in world-class airports.

Most recently, Kevin’s passion for creating high-quality experiences led him to disrupt the hair industry by partnering with his wife to launch Sweetroots – a socially conscious hair bar using only naturally derived products. The first location is in downtown Atlanta with additional locations coming soon.

Prior to founding H&H Hospitality, Kevin began his career in New York City at Goldman Sachs providing financial services to hedge-fund clients.

Kevin has been published on industry-related topics and you may find him on panels encouraging more diversity in business. His leadership extends beyond the private sector, where he has served in numerous capacities with organizations focused on civic and economic empowerment. Kevin serves on the Executive Board of BWHI, a non-profit focused on minority health disparities. He received his B.S. in Finance from Hampton University.
Our Featured Participants

Yolanda Owens  
*CEO & Founder, iwi fresh*

As a college student, Yolanda Owens, nicknamed Yogi, couldn’t make peace with the idea of using harsh, chemical-laden products on her skin. Inspired by her grandmother who treated family ills with nutrition and self-made herbal remedies, Owens produced her own line of skincare recipes and beauty creams for herself and her friends.

Though she never imagined these recipes would one day launch her into celebrity status as an all-natural "skincare chef," she did believe that fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, and essential oils were the only ingredients suitable for a healthy, beautiful body.

Today, what was once a hobby has evolved into a mission of feeding your skin the Truth with raw veggies from the farm!

*iwi = it is what it is*
ANNOUNCEMENTS

JOIN APOSTLE DARRYL WINSTON & GREATER WORKS FOR

BAG YOUR BLESSING

DRIVE UP FOOD DISTRIBUTION

SATURDAY, JULY 18TH • 10AM-12NOON

HOST LOCATION
HIGHER GROUND EMPOWERMENT CENTER
BISHOP DEXTER JOHNSON, PASTOR
561 Spencer St. • Atlanta, GA. 30314

Food will be distributed on a FIRST COME, FIRST SERVE basis.

WWW.GREATERVERSASSEMBLY.ORG

Do you know, own, or love a business on the Westside?
Support Westside Business Awareness
To join the Westside Business Directory or participate in an upcoming community market:
email Joan@westsidefuturefund.org with the subject line ATTN: Westside Business
FREE COVID-19 TESTING

MERCEDES-BENZ STADIUM LOT
112 Postell St. Atlanta, GA 30314
THUR - SAT  10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

No Appointment Needed
No ID Required
Confidential

Additional Covid-19 Testing at:

The Family Health Center at West End
Schedule Appt. (404) 752-1400 | MON - FRI  8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

CVS at Good Samaritan Health Center
ADULTS only - RAPID TEST | Schedule Appt. (404) 523-6571
MON - THUR  8:30 AM - 4:00 PM | FRI - SAT  8:30 AM - 12:00 PM

For up-to-date testing information in Fulton County, please visit
https://www.fultoncountyga.gov/covid-19/covid-testing-sites

On behalf of the Westside Collective Effort,
Westside Future Fund is maintaining an information
and resources webpage with relevant
resources to benefit the neighborhoods we serve.
https://www.westsidefuturefund.org/covid-19-info/
If you or someone you know tests positive for COVID-19, give us a call for any of the following:

- Help with getting food
- Assistance with seeking employment, counseling or housing
- Understanding your COVID-19 test results
- Tips to protect you and your family
- Ways to prevent the spread
- Monitoring your symptoms
- When to seek medical attention
- Help with getting medications
- Assistance with connecting to other helpful resources.

Do you need a doctor or have other health related questions? Text Westside to 51555 to connect to a provider by phone for free.
WE’RE HERE TO HELP

Call 404-430-8180

Westside Connect Help Line

One number to get the help you need: Food, Housing, Counseling, Employment, Education, Health Care, COVID-19 Testing

Feeling lonely, lost, stressed, anxious or down?

Need help managing your health condition?

Call 404-430-8180 today!

Need a Doctor?

Text: Westside to 51555

CHRIS180.ORG

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) AWARENESS

BACKGROUND

What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is an illness caused by the transmission of a new coronavirus that can spread from person to person or through contact with a contaminated object or surface.
- People of any age can be infected and get COVID-19.
- Older adults and people who have medical conditions like heart disease (for example hypertension, high blood pressure), lung disease (for example asthma, COPD) or diabetes are at higher risk for developing serious complications or death.

WHAT YOU MAY EXPERIENCE

Symptoms

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after being exposed to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever or chills, cough, sudden loss of taste or smell, fatigue, muscle or body aches, sore throat, headache, nausea, congestion, and shortness of breath.
BACKGROUND FOR REFERENCE: WWW.ENTREPRISESCANADA.CA

WHAT YOU MAY EXPERIENCE

Symptoms

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after being exposed to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever or chills, cough, sudden loss of taste or smell, fatigue, muscle or body aches, sore throat, headache, nausea, congestion, and shortness of breath.

HOW TO STAY HEALTHY

PROPER HANDWASHING

- Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds!
  - If you do not have soap and water, use 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Stay in your home when possible!
  - Avoid hanging out with friends and family members that do not live in your same household.
- Keep a distance of at least 6 feet from individuals when outside of your home.

CLOTH FACE COVERING

- Use a cloth face covering over MOUTH and NOSE!
- Keeps you from potentially infecting others.
- Keeps others from potentially infecting you.

*Helps prevent the spread of COVID-19 when EVERYONE wears a face covering!*

LEARN MORE AT CDC.GOV

MOREHOUSE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

*You can have COVID-19, feel fine, and still spread the disease!*
Gentrification of urban American cities is a complex phenomenon with social, political and economic implications. It represents a double-edged sword with both opportunities and challenges. The infusion of higher-income individuals into urban centers generates increased renewal investments in formerly neglected and abandoned blighted communities. It provides needed revenue to local municipalities to meet the expense of much-needed infrastructure and service delivery improvements. Unfortunately, gentrification and displacement are manifesting as symptoms nationally as the urban center across our nation thrives to attract upper-middle-income families while displacing current residents with increasing housing costs that exclude the working poor and altering the cultural and historical fabric of urban America cities.

Gentrification can be managed and provide an opportunity for Atlanta, Georgia, to honor its most noted son and drum major for social justice: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Atlanta can once again shine as an urban American city “Too Busy to Hate.” We can redefine the G word. We are in a moment of opportunity for the creation of the “Beloved Community,” a community of racial and economic diversity.

But it will not just happen, it must be intentionally developed. It is simple, but requires authentic partnership between community, political and private stakeholders committed to the possibility of the “Beloved Community.” It will require a resident retention plan that prevents forced displacement, inclusionary affordable housing policy that supports mixed income and racial diversity by acknowledging the area median income, and a tax abatement program to protect vulnerable home and business owners.

The Historic Westside Community is poised with the opportunity to manifest not forced displacement, but demonstrate how to align urban transformation with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s vision of “The Beloved Community.” A community where justice and equality is the order of the day; an authentic mixed community where all can live, change and grow without the destruction of the Historic Westside Community’s cultural integrity.

To accomplish the building of the Beloved Community, trust must be established requiring a shift from traditional transactional approaches to community redevelopment. We had declared that our approach will be transformative and centered on the development of human capital. This innovative transformative approach to community development is no easy task. It requires that both residents, stakeholders and service providers rethink and reset traditional mindsets associated with poverty that fails to see and value the many assets within communities and design programs that empower residents with the skills and resources to be a part of the solution with equality and equity.

This writer loves living and working within the Historic Westside Community. Having chosen to call it home for nearly three decades, I proudly celebrate the beauty of community. We are a very resilient community that has, in spite of many challenges, continued to make contributions to society, especially as it relates to striving for social justice and an equitable society.

Unfortunately, too often those who seek to serve often overlook the value of relational capacity that exists within community, wealth of knowledge and ability to be a vital asset to achieving transformative sustainable communities.

Envision what could happen as residents and dedicated stakeholders shift their mindsets and reinvent how to renew communities without displacement, where there is the pollination of skills and the capacity to stay in communication even when they are difficult, seeking to establish trust and new ways of engagement that produce the greater good for humanity while creating economically healthy, thriving businesses, well-kept homes, quality affordable housing that is reflective of the earning of the communities’ workforce, accessible and affordable healthcare, high-performing educational institutions. In this moment of opportunity, we can be the change that the world is looking for and create the environment that produces productive citizens with economic and social mobility by design. As residents and stakeholders, we will either fulfill or betray the vision of the beloved community based on our actions or inaction. There is a critical need for advocacy on behalf of the often-marginalized long-term residents in gentrifying communities; we have the opportunity to shift that. Where do you stand? I shall continue to strive to be a drum major for justice, equality and inclusion for the establishment of the “Beloved Community.”
THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVALUABLE SUPPORT IN MAKING THESE SUMMITS POSSIBLE:

For bulletin ideas and comments, contact Elizabeth Wilkes at elizabeth@westsidefuturefund.org.

How to Connect with Us

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For bulletin ideas and comments, contact Elizabeth Wilkes at elizabeth@westsidefuturefund.org.