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Westside Future Fund, Atlanta Public Schools Unite in Commitment to Improve Education Outcomes on Historic Westside

*Westside Future Fund Pledges \$16.4 Million
Over Five Years towards Westside Education Initiatives*

The Coca-Cola Foundation, SunTrust Bank Commit \$2 Million in Support

ATLANTA – July 20, 2017 – The **Westside Future Fund** (WFF) and **Atlanta Public Schools** (APS) announced today a formal partnership to improve education outcomes on Atlanta's historic Westside.

The commitment: to collaboratively develop and sustain a cradle-to-college pipeline of STEM-based "innovation" schools in the target neighborhoods of English Avenue, Vine City, Ashview Heights and Atlanta University Center.

The Westside Future Fund will work directly with APS to execute the strategy, focusing on Hollis Innovation Academy (Hollis) – the STEM-based, K-8 school that opened in 2016 - as the pilot.

To support the execution of the agreement, signed by **Westside Future Fund executive director John Ahmann** and **APS superintendent Dr. Meria Carstarphen** during today's announcement, the Westside Future Fund has pledged to raise approx. \$16.4 million over five years.

"In the past two years since we launched the Westside Future Fund, I have been proud of the partnerships this organization has built with our city's philanthropic and business communities," **said Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed**. "From the beginning, WFF's approach has been centered around listening to community members and identifying essential resources to meet their needs. Today's announcement of a new effort to support a cradle-to-college pipeline in our Westside stadium neighborhoods addresses a vital need, and demonstrates again how public and private leaders are taking a multi-layered, comprehensive approach to community revitalization."

"We couldn't make this school a reality without the help from many Westside partners through the coordinated efforts of the Westside Future Fund," **said Superintendent Carstarphen**. "This investment will go far in making Hollis Academy an innovative learning model that benefits our students, families and the surrounding community."

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Immediately following the agreement signing, two of the Westside Future Fund's philanthropic partners - **The Coca-Cola Foundation** and **SunTrust Bank Charitable Irrevocable Trust** – each announced commitments of \$1 million.

“A quality education sparks creativity, new ideas and experiences for children – all of which build confidence for our future generation,” said **David Fuller, head of corporate philanthropy at SunTrust Bank**. “We’re proud to partner with the Westside Future Fund to invest in the ongoing academic achievement of its neighborhood students.”

“Education is one of the most vital components of a successful community, and we believe all children should have the opportunity to reach their full potential,” said **Helen Smith Price, President of The Coca-Cola Foundation and Vice President of Global Community Affairs for The Coca-Cola Company**. “We hope to provide endless opportunities for our local youth through this rich education experience led by Westside Future Fund and Atlanta Public Schools.”

Enriched Learning Environment

Among other improvements, the funding will allow Hollis to hire 21 additional teachers and instructional paraprofessionals this school year, nearly doubling the school's current instructional staff.

Each intervention in the partnership strategy was driven by input from Hollis leadership.

Hollis principal, **Dr. Diamond Jack**, provided initial recommendations, a prioritized list of needs and targets on improving student performance, which were then validated by best-practice research, led by the Westside Future Fund.

For example, the addition of teachers was based on research that determined that one key to improving educational outcomes in schools where most students are living in high-poverty situations is to decrease the student to teacher ratio. At Hollis, more than 88% of the students are considered to come from high-poverty situations.

Additionally, the partnership strategy includes support for extended school days, experiential learning, professional development for faculty, and social and emotional counseling for students and families.

Another critical piece of the agreement was the development of a strong governance model. Westside Future Fund board members **Dr. Beverly Tatum, President Emerita of Spelman College**, and **Sylvia Russell, Georgia education advocate**, serve as active members of the local governance of Hollis, which also includes parent and faculty representation.

The partnership with Atlanta Public Schools and Hollis is central to the WFF's commitment to “Cradle to Career” education as part of its collaborative-impact community revitalization strategy.

The Westside Future Fund is also very supportive of affordable, high-quality early childhood education, illustrated through its support of the YMCA's new Leadership and Learning Center, which will be a feeder into Hollis. It is scheduled to open in Vine City fall of 2018.

Other Westside Future Fund impact areas include safety and security; quality mixed-income communities; and community health and wellness.

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“Westside Future Fund is committed to improving the lives of residents in our four historic neighborhoods, and children are at the tip of that commitment,” **said Westside Future Fund’s John Ahmann.** “We also recognize that an investment in education is one of the most powerful instruments of change. Through our support of Dr. Jack and the rest of the faculty and staff at Hollis we are confident that we can be the wind beneath their wings.”

In addition to The Coca-Cola Foundation and SunTrust Bank, the partnership has received support from the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation. The Chick-fil-A Foundation is also a philanthropic supporter of Hollis Innovation Academy.

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About The Westside Future Fund: The Westside Future Fund is a not-for-profit organization with the mission to reinvigorate community growth by coordinating and accelerating efforts to elevate the quality of life in Atlanta’s historic Westside neighborhoods. We do this by connecting resources with needs; convening the right people around the table; collaborating on strategies; and coordinating all of these efforts, which are vital to the Westside’s long-term success. The WFF was established in December 2014 by the Atlanta Committee for Progress (ACP), a coalition of top CEOs and leaders from Atlanta’s private sector, universities and nonprofits in partnership with Mayor Kasim Reed. For more information, visit www.westsidefuturefund.org.

About Atlanta Public Schools: Atlanta Public Schools is one of the largest school districts in the state of Georgia, serving approximately 52,000 students across 88 schools. The district is organized into nine K-12 clusters with 68 traditional schools, 16 charter schools, two citywide single-gender academies and two alternative programs. For more information, visit www.atlantapublicschools.us , follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/AtlantaPublicSchools/> and on Twitter @apsupdate.

About Michael R. Hollis Innovation Academy: Michael R. Hollis Innovation Academy is a PK-8 model in the Atlanta Public Schools. Hollis opened in the fall of 2016 and began by servicing PK-5 and adding a grade level each year. We are a newly formed school through an aggressive turnaround strategy to improve the academic performance of the students formerly zoned for the now closed Bethune Elementary School. Hollis uses a STEM framework guided by GA Tech CEISMC and the rigorous EL Education model to focus on relational character building and preparing students for college and career.

About The Coca-Cola Foundation: The Coca-Cola Foundation is the global philanthropic arm of The Coca-Cola Company. Since its inception in 1984, the Foundation has awarded more than \$900 million in grants to support sustainable community initiatives around the world. For more information about The Coca-Cola Foundation, please visit www.coca-colacompany.com/our-company/the-coca-cola-foundation.

About SunTrust Bank: SunTrust Banks, Inc. (NYSE: STI) is a purpose-driven company dedicated to Lighting the Way to Financial Well-Being for the people, businesses, and communities it serves. Headquartered in Atlanta, SunTrust operates an extensive branch and ATM network throughout the high-growth Southeast and Mid-Atlantic states, along with 24-hour digital access. Certain business lines serve consumer, commercial, corporate, and institutional clients nationally. As of March 31, 2017, SunTrust had total assets of \$206 billion and total deposits of \$163 billion. The Company provides deposit, credit, trust, investment, mortgage, asset management, securities brokerage, and capital market services. Member FDIC. SunTrust leads onUp, a national movement inspiring Americans to build financial confidence. Join the movement at onUp.com.