

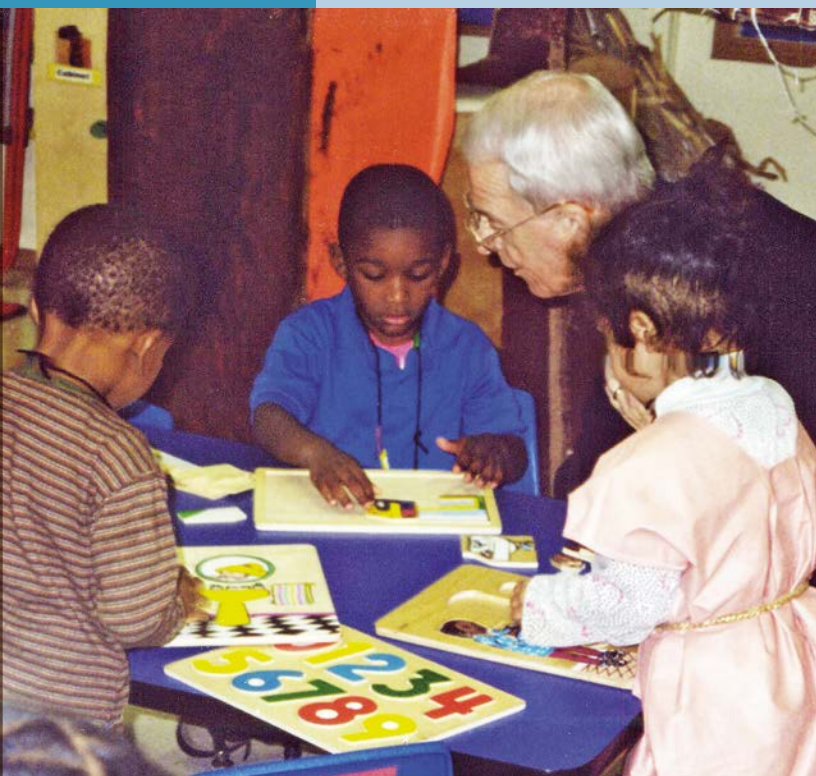


# Highlights and Reflections

The Zeist Foundation's 25-Year Investment  
in the Edgewood Neighborhood



THE ZEIST FOUNDATION, INC.





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When Dr. George Brumley, Jr. and Jean Brumley established the Zeist Foundation in 1989 they were intent on engaging their five children in philanthropy in Atlanta. After Dr. Brumley retired from Emory University School of Medicine as the Chair of the Department of Pediatrics in 1995, he was ready to focus “full-time” on philanthropic endeavors. Building on lessons from The Atlanta Project, an anti-poverty initiative launched in 1991 by President Jimmy Carter, Dr. Brumley adopted a “place-based” strategy and selected Atlanta’s distressed Edgewood neighborhood—a one-mile square area three miles from Emory in southeast Atlanta—as the focus of the Foundation’s efforts to improve outcomes for underserved children and families.

At that time, the Edgewood neighborhood was home to approximately 4,500 residents, and it was plagued by poverty, dilapidated housing, low-performing schools, poor health outcomes, and drug-related crime. Most of the residents were African American, and one-third were children. The majority lived in rental housing, and nearly one-third lived below the poverty level.

“One of my broader concerns is how do we as a society provide an educational system that can get the most of everyone’s intellect.

To paraphrase Warren Buffett, no city can call itself great without having an excellent public-school system. Given what we understand about what is possible, we must do whatever is necessary to make our school systems effective.

The commitment at Whitefoord is our statement that the neighborhood school is very important and a critical opportunity for intervention.

Our newest initiative proposes to work directly with the Superintendent and assumes that the private sector’s freedom and flexibility may be able to bring together a number of forces for the overall good of the system. I believe strongly that these initiatives provide excellent opportunities to contribute to the improvement of the public-school system and the quality of life in our city.”

— Dr. George Brumley, Jr.’s  
“Personal Reflections”  
at the Zeist Family Office  
Annual Meeting in 1999



## AN EARLY FOCUS ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Recognizing that many students in Edgewood's elementary and middle schools had poor health outcomes, the Zeist Foundation began its work by drawing on Dr. Brumley's medical expertise and his relationship with colleague Dr. Veda Johnson, an Atlanta native who attended Emory Medical School. They recognized the social determinants of health and worked together to create a school-based health center inside Whitefoord Elementary School in 1994 and in Coan Middle School in 1999.

As it was making these initial investments in children's access to quality healthcare, the Foundation engaged residents to determine their service needs and the programs they wanted to see in the community, launching a nonprofit organization—Whitefoord Community Program (now called Whitefoord, Inc.) to manage these community-based efforts. Over time, these programs included NAEYC-accredited (National Association for the Education of Young Children) childcare, dental care services for children and adults, adult education, afterschool and enrichment programs, and an Intel Computer Clubhouse for middle school youth.

From the beginning, the Zeist Foundation approached its place-based work by establishing public-private partnerships and acknowledging that philanthropic investments alone could not fully solve the systemic problems impacting the quality of life of Atlanta's low-income families.



## Health Lessons Learned

- Improving health outcomes requires providers to **recognize the social determinants of health**.
- Increasing **access to quality healthcare for children strengthens relationships and trust** with residents and parents.
- **Seek school leaders who recognize the value of a school-based health center**, who work with community partners, and who develop strong relationships with families.
- **Federally Qualified Health Centers with mission-alignment are great medical partners** because they can provide services on a sliding scale and use Medicaid reimbursements to increase sustainability of school-based health centers and community-based family centers.

*Above: Grand Opening of the Whitefoord Elementary School-Based Health Center in 1994*

*Left: Dr. Charles Moore of HEALing Community Center*

“We can make significant improvements in the quality of public education available to poor children in urban areas. We have the resources, the know-how, and the models to do this. What is lacking is the will and conviction to make it happen. Those who understand the importance of education must work with creativity and a sense of urgency to find ways to generate the will, to make those who are presently indifferent or unconcerned understand what is at stake. What is at stake are children’s lives and the kind of society we will become.”

— Professor Pedro Noguera, *City Schools and the American Dream* (2003)

## A HOLISTIC APPROACH

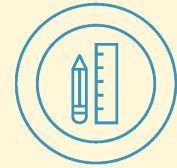
### As the Foundation deepened its investments in the Edgewood

community, Dr. Brumley saw the detrimental impact that the deplorable housing conditions were having on children and families and began investigating opportunities to improve living conditions in the neighborhood. When he learned that a developer was planning to construct a major retail complex on the outskirts of the neighborhood, he realized that existing residents would be at risk of displacement from increased property values and higher rents. He recruited an Edgewood neighborhood leader, Garry Long, to help him improve housing conditions and maintain affordability under an intermediary organization called Mayson Avenue Cooperative (MAC). Mr. Long began his service with the Foundation on July 1, 2003, but a few weeks later, Dr. Brumley and 11 family members died in a family tragedy.

The two surviving daughters, Nancy Brumley Robitaille and Marie Brumley Foster, plus Brad Foster (Marie’s husband), assumed leadership of the Foundation and resumed their family’s philanthropic work in 2005. Knowing of their father’s desire to improve and preserve affordable housing in Edgewood, the board and new Executive Director Kappy deButts developed a working relationship with Garry Long. A new chapter began.

The Foundation’s place-based philanthropy in Edgewood started with its support of Georgia’s first school-based health center. Within the first decade, however, after listening and responding to community residents, the Foundation’s investments expanded into a more holistic family-focused strategy that included three major elements:

- **Health**—from school-based health centers to community gardens.
- **Education**—from early learning programs to improving local public schools.
- **Housing**—from a renovation vision to new and improved affordable housing.



## Education Lessons Learned

- **Strong partnerships with school leaders** at multiple levels—including school board, superintendent, principals and teachers—are critical.
- **Supporting children from birth to graduation requires a holistic vision** and investments that address their social, emotional, physical and academic needs within a feeder system.
- Individualized and intensive educational supports can help struggling learners advance, but **schools must adapt to the changing conditions** in the 21st century and reinvent teaching and learning.



Retreat at Edgewood Townhomes



## RESPONSIBLE RELOCATION AND QUALITY AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In 2005, the Zeist Foundation acquired the scattered-site Edgewood Housing Apartments properties through Mayson Avenue Cooperative (MAC). Over the next five years, the Foundation supported the difficult and deliberative work of MAC as it led an effort to redevelop the property. Steps included applying for Low-Income Housing Tax Credits on three separate occasions, visiting the East Baltimore community to learn about the Annie E. Casey Foundation's affordable housing and relocation strategies, building a 10-person Responsible Relocation team led by Associate Director Atiba Mbiwan and Garry Long to support the more than 500 residents as they moved, managing a demolition project of a 12-acre scattered site, and funding the Edgewood Master Planning Process (the Edgewood Community Revitalization Plan was adopted by the City of Atlanta). A major strategic decision during this timeframe was the Foundation's shift from a partnership with a nonprofit housing developer, Progressive Redevelopment Incorporated, to a for-profit housing developer, Columbia Residential. Not only did Columbia Residential have greater financial capacity, the company had already built two high-quality affordable housing developments in Edgewood—one for families and one for seniors—and was equipped to manage the development upon completion.

As the new affordable family housing—Retreat at Edgewood Townhomes—was developed in two phases from 2010–2012, the Zeist Foundation funded its longstanding nonprofit partner Families First to provide staff members who could orient the new townhome tenants to the Edgewood neighborhood and connect them to its assets—schools, community gardens, early learning programs, and more.

## Housing/Relocation Lessons Learned

- **Build relationships and trust** with residents before focusing on housing redevelopment.
- **Significant public investment is required** to preserve affordability for very low-income families.
- **Wraparound supportive services** help families maintain some sense of stability before, during and after relocation.
- Market forces and gentrification pose immense challenges in seeking to preserve affordability. **Public private partnerships are critical** to the development of equitable housing solutions.



Monthly meeting of Jackson Cluster nonprofit leaders at MAC office



## SCALING EFFORTS BEYOND EDGEWOOD

The Foundation also began to extend its reach beyond Edgewood's neighborhood boundaries in several ways. In 2009, after 15 years of operating school-based health centers in two Edgewood schools, Dr. Veda Johnson approached the Foundation to propose expanding this model across the state of Georgia. As the nation struggled to address access to health care, Dr. Johnson's team scaled the school-based health center model over the next decade, helping to establish nearly 50 school-based health centers in Georgia's urban, suburban, and rural areas.

The Foundation also broadened its education focus beyond Edgewood and started providing support to other elementary schools that "fed" into Coan Middle School, later broadening to include all schools in the larger Maynard Jackson High School cluster. This expansion helped to align educational supports from birth through high school graduation and promoted practices that were later scaled district-wide.

During this time, the Edgewood neighborhood was also changing. The completion of the Edgewood Retail District on the neighborhood's western border in 2005 transformed the area into a major intown retail hub, attracting more affluent shoppers and residents. Improvements in the neighborhood's housing stock were also making homes less affordable for existing residents. These changes in Edgewood housing were part of a citywide and national trend, as the numbers of public housing, low-cost, and affordable housing units have fallen and increasing numbers of luxury units have been built. Responding to the dramatic changes in the Edgewood neighborhood, the Zeist Foundation has evolved. It crafted a new strategic plan in 2017 to guide its continued commitment to support underserved children, youth, and families in Atlanta and across the state, drawing on what it has learned through its place-based philanthropy in the Edgewood neighborhood.

With 2019 marking 25 years since Dr. Brumley helped launch Georgia's first school-based health center inside Whitefoord Elementary, the Foundation is reflecting on the past quarter century and its work with and in support of the community that has called Edgewood home.

## Lessons Learned from 25 Years of Place-Based Philanthropy

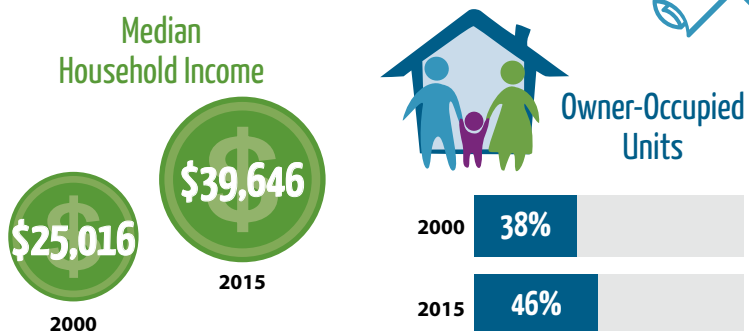
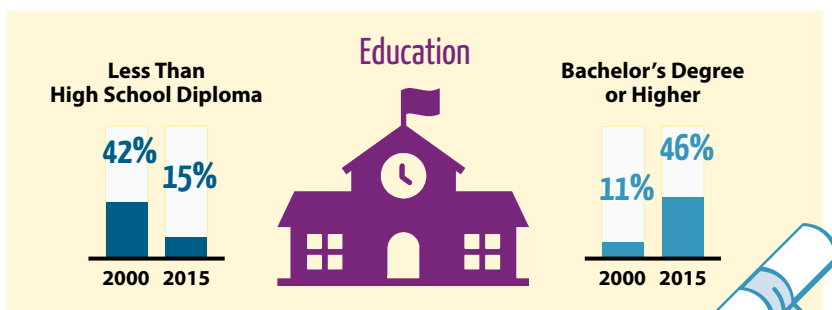
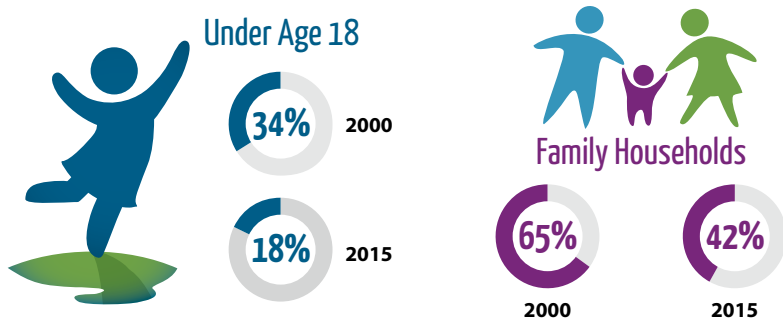
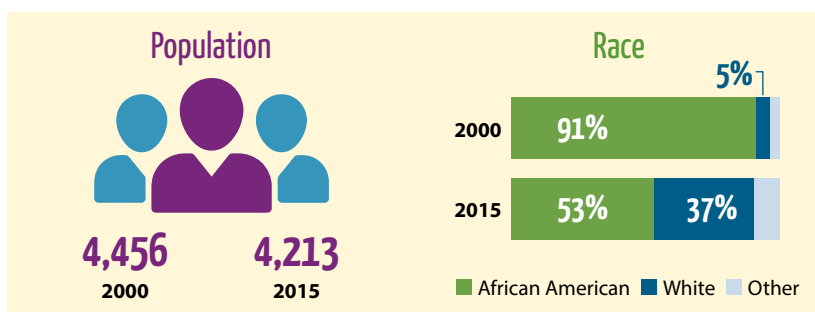
When using a place-based approach ...

- **Look for opportunities to learn** from and collaborate with your philanthropic peers.
- Recognize that **market forces are difficult to control**, yet seek strategies that mitigate the gentrification effects and promote equity.
- Remember that **partnership—with residents and public and private stakeholders—is at the heart of this work.**
- **Build strong relationships with residents** and let them define the work.
- **Use data as a constant guide** to inform investments and identify needs and opportunities.
- **Understand that there are no quick-fixes** or easy solutions and "Revolutionary Patience" is required.
- **Build on the strengths** of the children and families and their support systems.



## EDGEWOOD: THEN (2000) AND NOW (2015)

Source: Neighborhood Nexus



The Zeist Foundation's work in Edgewood has been rooted in a commitment to work together with family and community

to ensure that every child has what he or she needs to succeed in school, visualizing a community that cares for its children in the context of everything that impacts their lives, healthy children who are not hampered by the physical and emotional traumas of life, a school system that supports and maximizes the academic achievement of its students, functioning families equipped with the basic resources required to raise creative and productive children, and a community that is safe and nurturing for all who live within its boundaries.

— Excerpt from "George Brumley: A Catalyst for a Vision" by Dr. Veda Johnson, July 2003

# 25 YEARS OF PLACE-BASED INVESTMENTS IN THE EDGEWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD

