

atlanta civic site



Creating Safer Communities in Southwest Atlanta

Atlanta is one of two civic sites, along with Baltimore, where the Annie E. Casey Foundation has a special connection and long-term commitment to child and family well-being. The Foundation is particularly focused on a set of neighborhoods in the southwest corner of the city called Neighborhood Planning Unit V (NPU-V).

In 2001, the Casey Foundation's Atlanta Civic Site team began working to increase opportunities for low-income families in NPU-V by focusing on neighborhood revitalization, strengthening local organizations to galvanize community involvement and promoting high-quality early childhood education and child development. More recently, Casey has begun partnering with residents to address neighborhood safety and develop coordinated, community-based responses to trauma.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), gun violence is the leading cause of death for young black males ages 15 to 24. Its effects are disproportionately felt in low-income communities and communities of color, like NPU-V.

By exploring violence prevention and intervention efforts with residents, Casey hopes to transform the neighborhoods in Atlanta's southside into safe, thriving communities.

Research and Design

In 2016, Casey launched an exploratory research and design process to begin equipping residents and other leaders in the community with the tools they need to effectively address violence.

- The Foundation completed a scan of existing community safety resources in Atlanta, particularly those focused on trauma-response strategies and street intervention.
- Casey hosted a workshop where representatives from violence-prevention organizations across the country shared strategies for promoting safety, including training street workers to mediate conflicts, engaging with local law enforcement and creating trauma-response teams.

- The Foundation trained 15 NPU-V residents in “psychological first aid,” including techniques for responding to traumatic events, providing comfort and helping stabilize those affected by a homicide or other act of violence.
- An advisory committee of 35 local partners and residents participated in a nine-month community design process to develop intervention programs tailored to the needs of NPU-V neighborhoods.

Along with these efforts, the Foundation hosted a learning exchange in Baltimore with 50 funders, practitioners and safety leaders from Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston and Milwaukee to develop recommendations for bringing this work to scale and securing more investment from the philanthropic sector.

Early Implementation

In 2017, Casey began building on this work by taking steps to implement the two-pronged intervention pilots that emerged from the community design process:

- a community trauma-response protocol that integrates various entities and strategies, including first responders (police, fire and emergency services), city agencies, health care institutions, nonprofits and other community-based groups; and
- a street outreach and intervention program that allows community leaders to mediate violent situations, build relationships and provide alternatives for those perpetrating violence.

An RFP process was conducted, and the nonprofit Chris 180 was selected to begin establishing healing circles and develop a network of residents to participate in a coordinated community trauma-response plan. The initial focus of Chris 180’s pilot work is the Peoplestown, Pittsburgh and Mechanicsville communities.

Additionally, the Casey Foundation is working with PIVOT (Program to Interrupt Violence thru Outreach and Treatment) Atlanta Task Force to establish a coordinated hospital and street intervention program that will launch in 2018. Morehouse School of Medicine’s Prevention Research Center also was selected to begin developing an overall evaluation framework.

Looking Ahead

The Foundation and its partners plan to continue implementing these pilots in 2018. Casey hopes to spread what it is learning in Atlanta and work with other funders to identify gaps and opportunities for greater investment in these life-saving strategies, frameworks and programmatic approaches.

The stakes are high and it is going to take an all-hands-on-deck approach to improve community safety and the ability to effectively respond to trauma. No one system, sector or funder can do it alone, and Casey is eager to welcome additional partners to this work.

For more information, please visit www.aecf.org/atlanta.