



**Emmaus
House**



**Strategic Plan
2023 - 2025**

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Introduction

The Emmaus House 2023-2025 Strategic Plan recognizes that the community it serves – Peoplestown and the surrounding neighborhoods – is in transition. We seek to address the needs of our neighbors, where they are, and where they might be in this fast-changing community. Our Strategic Plan centers on strategic implementation and learning over these three years of rapid change for Peoplestown and its surrounding neighborhoods. We will implement our strategic plan in partnership and deep engagement with our community, utilizing a “participatory” approach.¹ Emmaus House will tailor core strategies and activities that directly and comprehensively address

Mission

Since 1967, Emmaus House has worked in and served the residents of Peoplestown and surrounding neighborhoods on Atlanta’s southside.² The Peoplestown neighborhood is a historic community less than one mile from Downtown and the State Capitol. When Father Austin Ford founded Emmaus House in 1967 as a mission of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta, the Peoplestown community had suffered significant population loss and disinvestment because of urban renewal policies, interstate construction, and white rejection of residential racial integration. Since that time, Peoplestown residents have continued to bear the burden—along with similar urban core neighborhoods—of structural racism, entrenched poverty, and generational lack of opportunity.

New development—particularly the redevelopment of the area surrounding Georgia State Stadium to the north and the Atlanta BeltLine to the south—brings new opportunities and challenges to the Peoplestown community. Along with economic development, rapid gentrification threatens the displacement of many legacy residents and renters. In this context, Emmaus House seeks to remain faithful to the neighborhood it has served since 1967.

Reflecting that commitment, in December 2019, Emmaus House adopted the following mission statement:

¹ Participatory strategic learning means working directly with the community to inform the learning to ensure the community’s voice is included in the evaluative inquiry – e.g., deciding what they would like to learn, using focus groups to help narrow areas of learning, and sharing results of our Strategic Learning.

² The use of “Peoplestown” throughout the rest of the Strategic Plan is intended to mean “Peoplestown and surrounding neighborhoods on the south side of Atlanta.”

“Emmaus House works to improve the economic and social well-being³ of the residents of Peopletown and our surrounding neighborhoods.”

Values Statement

Emmaus House stands for justice and equity, rooted in faith and a deep respect for the dignity of every human being. We harness the power of community, education, hope, and love to dismantle poverty, racism, and other barriers to opportunity in the lives and communities we serve.

Organizational Commitments and Approach

Emmaus House seeks transformational change in the lives of individuals, within communities, and in the systems that shape our lives. To achieve this change, we believe that we must focus on both relationships and results. Time spent building understanding, trust, and a common purpose is as valuable as time spent executing tasks. Therefore, all staff and volunteers must commit to building and maintaining relationships with community members and clients as partners in this work.⁴ At the same time, staff and volunteers must focus on measurable results. Each staff person and volunteer must seek the highest standard of professional excellence to achieve common goals.

Our commitment to relationships and results calls us to interact with the people we serve as people in need who deserve excellent services and as teachers with profound expertise on the issues we work together to solve.

The following Organizational Commitments are guideposts for implementing each of our strategic priorities. The advisory board and staff should embed these commitments in employee goals and work plans each year.

Relationship-Building:

Build meaningful relationships between staff and community members through staff participation in community-building activities, neighborhood events, and other forms of outreach.

³ According to researchers at SHNE, the Human Flourishing Program, and the Harvard Chan Department of Epidemiology, “human flourishing is understood as a state in which all aspects of a human life are favorable.” This approach embraces the wholeness of the person. The Well-Being Assessment assesses holistic well-being in six domains: emotional health, physical health, meaning and purpose, character strengths, social connectedness, and financial security. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/newsplus/new-paper-develops-a-comprehensive-measure-of-holistic-well-being/>

Performance Measures

Track measurable outcomes for each program that describe our efforts' impact on people in the community, using pre- and post-assessments and tracking referrals to partners.

Client Perspectives

Solicit and incorporate client perspectives to shape each program, including regular and anonymous client surveys, listening sessions, and sharing with partners feedback received.

Strategic Staffing

Recruit and retain the most qualified staff and volunteers for each program, with a relationship to the Peoplestown community treated as an essential qualification. All job descriptions will include community/cultural competency qualifications and community-building responsibilities. Each year, all staff will create SMARTIE⁵ Goals to guide their work and to serve as a guide for performance evaluation.

Racial Equity

Combat structural racism, racial prejudice, and bias by conducting Racial Equity impact analyses for program development and initiating learning experiences and dialogues. Recruit and support a diverse staff and Board that reflects the historical and present African American identity of the communities served and the spiritual tradition of the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta.

Collaboration

Build relationships with allies and achieve shared outcomes with partner organizations by creating partnerships with high-capacity advocacy and service organizations, local public schools, and community-based faith and civic organizations. Strengthen partnerships with faith communities, particularly Episcopal parishes, and individual supporters and foundations to advance and sustain the work.

Our Community

The primary focus of Emmaus House's work is its "Community," which we define geographically as Peoplestown and the surrounding neighborhoods on the southside of Atlanta, including those of NPU-V and Historic South Atlanta. Emmaus House will continue to serve the broader community (i.e., outside of Peoplestown and the surrounding neighborhoods) when considered appropriate through an analysis of the following considerations by Emmaus House Staff:

⁵ Strategic, measurable, ambitious, realistic, time-bound, inclusive, and equitable. For more information, see <https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/smartie-goals-worksheet/>.

1. Proximity to Peoplestown: Residents of geographic areas in and closest to Peoplestown will receive priority.
2. Financial cost of the service: Services with a low economic impact may receive priority over those requiring a significant financial investment.
3. Impact on staff resources: Services with low staff impact may receive priority over those requiring significant staff time.
4. Legacy of the relationship: There are situations in which Emmaus House may have a long-term relationship with a community member and may want to maintain that relationship even though they may no longer live in the geographic area that Emmaus House serves.

Strategies

We recognize that we can best serve families through a multi-generation approach that addresses distinct developmental phases, needs, and opportunities for different age groups within a family and community. We also recognize that a primary concern for those living with material poverty is building household assets, which requires increased household income. To this end, Emmaus House focuses on three strategies that inform our operational priorities.

- Creating a Ladder to Economic Opportunity that leads to economic stability
- Providing Multigenerational Education that supports economic mobility for the next generation.
- Optimizing Emmaus House assets for increased community impact.

Creating a Ladder to Economic Opportunity

Emmaus House will continue investing in activities supporting economic opportunity.⁶ A ladder serves as a metaphor for upward mobility that embraces four steps:

- Unstable (Crisis/Vulnerable) - No or inadequate income. Immediate needs that impact well-being. Unable to meet basic needs. Homeless or housing insecurity. Assistance Offered - Hygiene Kits, Food Pantry, Clothing Referrals, Benefits Screening, Social Security Assistance, Rx Assistance, Referrals for Job Readiness and Life Skills Training, Community Suppers
- Stable (Adequate resources) - Meeting all basic needs. Able to maintain safe and secure housing. Employed with adequate pay but few or no job benefits (varies based on age and functional abilities). Access to community resources and government benefits. Unable to save or manage financial emergencies.
Services Offered - Health Care Support, Emergency Financial Assistance, Financial Literacy/Budgeting, Case Management, Intermittent Food Pantry Access, Thanksgiving

⁶ According to Jered Bernstein of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, economic opportunity “corresponds to the realization of personal potential.” The opportunity that informs our work is “to take down the barriers that get between people and the realization of their economic potential.”

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/economy/improving-economic-opportunity-in-the-united-states>

at Home, Christmas Eve Party, Freedom School, Youth on the Move, Bridge of Hope, Parenting Education, Benefits Renewal, Personal & Professional Development Coaching, Referrals to Training Partners for Technical Skills, Transportation Assistance

- Self-Sufficient (Building capacity) - Sufficient income. Able to maintain stable housing, meet basic needs, and have some money left over. Hold regular and permanent employment. Have adequate income for paying monthly bills and saving some money. Experience a reduced need for government benefits. Supports Offered: Referrals to Career Development, Work Supports, and Safety Net Programs.
- Economically Mobile – Possesses a stable career with a sufficient and steady income, substantial savings, and an emergency fund. Income provides mobility in terms of neighborhood and type of housing. Resources Offered: N/A

The Emmaus House Muriel Lokey Help Center provides a ladder to economic success by stabilizing individuals in crisis and providing opportunities for increased household income through the following initiatives:

- Crisis intervention, such as rent, mortgage, utility, or property tax assistance;
- Access to the Emmaus House Client-Choice Food Pantry;
- Benefits screening, soft skills training, peer support, and collaboration with workforce development partners;
- Direct services or referrals that allow people to focus on longer-term results;
- Intensive case management through the Supports for Success program for those seeking higher employment.

Emmaus House will continue to offer more robust referrals and support for individuals to access housing and utility assistance and mental health, medical, legal, and re-entry services that address the core barriers to economic well-being.

Emmaus House is an entry point for parents and other individuals seeking job training and placement. We provide the preparation and support to help them succeed in a partner workforce development program. This work starts with crisis stabilization and supportive services that traditional workforce development organizations do not provide and may include benefits screening, securing housing, building financial literacy, and developing a peer support network.

Through the Bridge of Hope program, Emmaus House will stabilize families by training and equipping local faith communities to respond to homelessness in practical, tangible, and neighboring ways. We do this through a three-way partnership between a housing-Insecure family, neighboring volunteers from a faith community, and a case manager.⁷

In 2022, All Saints' Episcopal Church volunteers received training in "neighboring" in preparation for participating in the Bridge of Hope program. In 2023, we will secure transitional housing to create opportunities for families to move from unstable to stable.

⁷ <https://bridgeofhopeinc.org/our-model/>

To further our economic opportunity work, we plan to:

- Connect with the community to understand resident needs
- Define successful partnerships
 - Revisit our partnership with Atlanta Community Food Bank
 - Revisit all of our existing workforce development partnerships
- Create a landscape assessment of who we currently work with and identify potential partnerships and advocacy opportunities
 - The assessment will consider new or strengthened partnerships with groups like Housing Justice League, Partners for Home, Partnership for Southern Equity, and Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Association.
- Find sources of transitional housing that Bridge of Hope participants can use.

We will measure our success in these areas through the following:

- # of services rendered as Indicated by a monthly dashboard
- # of clients participating in longer-term case management
- lbs of food distributed

Providing Multigenerational Education⁸

Higher levels of education are correlated with increased income later in life. Therefore, we want to invest in education not just for our youth but for their families as well.

Emmaus House will continue to provide multigenerational education that supports economic mobility for the next generation. Specifically, Emmaus House will support academic achievement and youth development by engaging children, youth, and parents through multi-generation academic and personal support, culturally relevant programming, leadership development, and community organizing.

Emmaus House will strengthen its current work by aligning with and engaging local public schools, notably the Barack and Michelle Obama Academy, Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School, and Maynard Holbrook Jackson High School.

Two key programs anchor this work:

- Emmaus House supports and collaborates with the next generation of community leaders through Youth on the Move (YOTM), an out-of-school time program that provides an

⁸ According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a multi-generational approach “involves intentionally coordinating and aligning often isolated programs for kids and adults in a way that leads to accelerated progress in three key areas: (1) parents with family-supporting jobs; (2) children meeting developmental milestones; and (3) families able to fully support and engage in their child’s development. <https://www.aecf.org/resources/creating-opportunity-for-families>

opportunity to create new partnerships to serve teens and young adults with academic, social, entrepreneurial, cultural, and leadership development programming. In 2019, the Georgia Department of Education chose Emmaus House as a 21st Century Community Learning Center for its YOTM program.

- Emmaus House works to improve children’s literacy skills through its Children’s Defense Fund Freedom Schools® program, a six-week summer program. This program focuses on high-quality academic enrichment, parent and family development, civic engagement and social action, intergenerational servant leadership development, nutrition, and health and mental well-being.

These two programs bring considerable funding. However, the 21 Century Community Development grant that funds Youth on the Move will conclude after the 2023-2024 school year⁹, and plans to transition to other funding sources must be determined by the end of FY2023.

We will measure success in these areas using the following indicators:

- Freedom School¹⁰
 - Pre- and post-testing reading levels
 - Surveys of parents
 - Character and SEL skills surveys of students
 - Parent engagement and surveys
 - Number of books read by each student
 - Student Leader Intern surveys
- Youth on the Move¹¹
 - 50% of regularly attending students show improvement in reading comprehension
 - 60% of students improve their socioemotional skills
 - 60% of students score a six or higher on an anxiety and depression scale
 - 50% of seniors enroll in a college, trade school, military, entrepreneurship, or other job training program as indicated by their post-secondary education plan
 - 25% of parents attend an annual parent event
 - 50% of parents report feeling more confident engaging with school authority figures

While continuing this work, we will focus on our other initiatives:

- Connect with the community to understand their needs
- Identify partners who can help us fulfill those needs

⁹ Funding could conclude at the end of the '22-'23 school year, depending on key performance indicators.

¹⁰ These indicators are set by the Children’s Defence Fund. CDF provides a report card each November based on data collected by Emmaus House staff and testing done by a professional reading instructor.

¹¹ These metrics are part of the 21st Century Community Learningn Center agreement with the GA Department of Education.

- Research viability of afterschool programming to replace Study Hall programming¹²
- Explore advocacy opportunities with partner organizations:
 - Get Georgia Reading
 - Atlanta Speech School
 - Partnership for Southern Equity

Optimizing Assets for Increased Community Impact.

Property

With the departure of The Study Hall In 2022, we have additional space in the form of three new buildings: the Education Center, a “doublewide trailer,” and a brick house.

We use the Education Center for Freedom School in the summer, our annual benefit, and various community meetings. Mimi’s Yoga, a studio providing residents with yoga, healing circles, and other wellness opportunities, occupies the trailer. The brick building is vacant.

The rest of the property, facing Hank Aaron Drive, consists of the Emmaus House Chapel, Ford Hall, Ezzard Hall, the Emmaus House Office Building, and the Lokey Help Center (facing Haygood Aven.

A right-of-way alley divides the property in half.

We will create a plan to use these spaces effectively to increase mission impact. Tasks include:

- Understanding current requirements for utilities, maintenance, upkeep, and staffing
- Assessing needed capital improvements and raising required funds
- Creating a long-term plan for how to use the space
 - Connect with the community to understand the needs
 - Determine whether creating new programming or partnering with other nonprofits will have a more significant impact.
 - Research the feasibility of creating low-income housing, increased afterschool programming, and outreach to seniors.

We will know we are successful when we leverage the entire property to meet community needs.

Finances

Financial sustainability remains an essential aspect of EH’s ability to thrive. Acting as good stewards of existing funds, particularly those designated for capital Improvement and management of designated reserves, is essential as we consider future action.

¹² Conversations are ongoing with local elementary schools and WINGS for Kids.

To that end, the Advisory Board considers the following factors in its budgeting process:

Current Realities

- Reserve levels
- Diversity of funding
- Restricted v. unrestricted funding
- Assumptions (e.g., which grants are EH reliant on and expecting; what are potential threats to funding such as an economic downturn, loss of significant grants, etc.)

Future Considerations

- Aspirational levels of financing and operational reserves
- Data that can inform the cycles of funding
- Opportunities for increased funding
- Benchmarking against other nonprofits of comparable size/mission
- Risk tolerance
- Capital campaign possibilities

Resource Development

The Executive Director serves as Development Director, responsible for all funding areas. Supplementing the work of the ED are two agencies:

1. Purpose Possible manages writing and reporting on all grants (except for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which the ED manages).
2. Greengate Marketing manages all external communications, including newsletters, social media, and periodic campaigns. They also help with event management, including promotional materials and ticket sales.

Challenge: During the past several years, while grant income has increased, giving by individuals has remained stagnant. We need a plan to increase family foundation and individual giving through improved stewardship of existing donors and acquisition of new donors.

We need to ensure that the budget sufficiently support the organization's priorities, which will require increased funding.¹³

Closing Considerations

¹³ We're thinking specifically here about the need to fund longer-term case management work because we believe it's one way to help individuals and families to more up the ladder to economic success, Presently, this initiative is underfunded.

Emmaus House faces an adaptive challenge.¹⁴ For 55 years, the neighborhoods surrounding Emmaus House saw little positive change. Minimal positive development occurred, and that which did displaced residents and divided communities (building the connector, Fulton County Stadium, the Olympics, Turner Field, etc.) With the redevelopment of the stadium neighborhood and the construction of the Beltline, as well as wider population shifts, Peoplestown has seen rapid change and gentrification. Technical fixes alone will not allow Emmaus House to adapt successfully to its shifting environment.

A focus on educating new community members and residents on the history and current state of those we serve in Peoplestown will be an important contributor to long-term success. Additionally, an expanded focus on holistic well-being could be a way to navigate these changes while remaining true to our core mission of serving people who live with the effects of material poverty. We will consider expanding our focus to include other aspects of well-being described in footnote three – emotional health, physical health, meaning and purpose, character strengths, social connectedness, and financial security. We have already created a yoga and wellness center, and we share our campus with the Emmaus House chapel, an additional resource to inspire people to greater well-being.

As we look to the future, we remain intent on developing new tools, methods, and ways of working centered on our core value of respecting the dignity of every human being, recognizing that the people and the systems that we have in place will need to evolve.

¹⁴ The Kansas Leadership Center defines an adaptive challenge as “a problem, issue or opportunity that demands a response outside your current repertoire - you don’t have the information you need or a checklist you can follow to make the problem go away. For more, see *The KLC Leadership Framework*.