



FAIRFIELD, ALABAMA

GRANT-FUNDED PLACE-BASED HOUSING REVITALIZATION

Fairfield, AL
Population: 10,000
County: Jefferson

- Project Details: \$250,000 of grant funding for workforce housing
 - Impact: Place-based neighborhood revitalization, development of workforce housing
-

Fairfield is an historic community southwest of the city of Birmingham, developed by U.S. Steel as a master-planned company town after its purchase of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company in 1907. Fairfield retains some steel industry, but plant closures and significant declines in production decimated jobs and depleted the city's tax base from the 1970s through the early 2000s. Today, Fairfield encompasses two economically distressed census tracts, where an estimated 23.7% of its 10,000 residents are in poverty. The city lost 7% of its population between 2010 and 2020 and has been on the verge of municipal bankruptcy on multiple occasions since 2000.

Although Fairfield faces economic challenges, the city benefits from the presence of Miles College, an historic four-year liberal arts college and HBCU which has experienced rising enrollments and growth in fundraising in recent years. Fairfield's location on the western border of Birmingham makes it accessible to downtown, as well as to cities like Bessemer and Tuscaloosa, which have seen record levels of private investment and growth in advanced manufacturing, logistics, and shipping and distribution. In 2007, the Miles College Community Development Corporation (MCCDC) was created as a nonprofit corporation dedicated to building equitable and healthy communities within the City of Fairfield. MCCDC works closely with the city and other public entities to advance quality of life for Fairfield residents.

In 2021, MCCDC began executing a long-term, place-based revitalization initiative to bring more quality housing to Fairfield, meet the needs of low-to-moderate income residents, and strengthen neighborhoods immediately adjacent to Miles College.



FAIRFIELD, ALABAMA

Fairfield has a diverse stock of single-family homes, including some of the most impressive historic one hundred-year-old homes in the Birmingham area. According to the U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 81% of Fairfield's housing is more than 50 years old. But decades of disinvestment and population loss has devastated these historic neighborhoods, where vacant and abandoned lots undermine property values and quality of place. The MCCDC's housing initiative is a multi-phase plan to acquire vacant, tax delinquent properties in the Interurban Heights neighborhood, clear and maintain the lots, and prepare them for redevelopment. Once a critical mass of properties has been acquired, MCCDC will redevelop these lots with affordably-priced housing and develop creative pathways to homeownership for new residents.

To support this effort, Opportunity Alabama worked with MCCDC to develop the work plan for Phase I and write a grant proposal to a private foundation dedicated to affordable housing development in the Birmingham area. MCCDC successfully secured \$250,000 for this initiative.