



Background

For many years the community of Mims was home to a broad cross-section of African Americans – both professional & non-professional. The community was unified and progressive. For example, Harry T. Moore was a resident of the Mims Community. His wife, Harriette Moore, was born and raised in (what is now called) East Mims. Other East Mims area professionals include Nathaniel & Bernice Pilate who lived on Main St. in Mims (now Harry T. Moore) . Nathaniel Pilate was a senior manager at NASA and Bernice was an educator. One of the Pilate’s daughters, Patrice earned a Law Degree and recently retired from the Brevard County State Attorney Office. The East Mims Campbell Family boasts many educators and professionals including a prominent national figure Melony Campbell. In the Jim Crow Era, members of the Campbell family (famously) financed and built a schoolhouse to educate their children. Over the years Mims has experienced many changes ----one of these changes resulted in East Mims becoming a distinct area in the broader Mims Community.

Over the past 20-30 the East Mims portion of the Mims community has experienced decline in living conditions and experienced an increase in crime and social issues. Improvements have been hampered by the lack of vision, purpose, commitment, and leadership

Tooley Community Development Group (TCDG)

Background - Established in June 2020, Tooley Community Development Group (TCDG) is an outgrowth of (the late) Robert H. and Earlean R. Tooley who had visions for the enhancement of their beloved East Mims community. Earlean Tooley an educator for 30 years teaching Biology at Astronaut High School held a master’s degree in Micro-Biology from Nashville HBCU, Fisk University. Robert H. Tooley, a graduate of Florida A&M University, was employed by NASA at Kennedy Space Center where he was one of the first black NASA engineers and held supervisory responsibility for one of the Shuttle-era launch Control Rooms.

Approach - Tooley Community Development Group (TCDG) is the vehicle established, by the children of the Tooley’s, with the express purpose of improving the East Mims Community as envisioned by Robert H. and Earlean R. Tooley. The TCDG has established a strong governing structure to oversee these efforts. Members of the governing Board include individuals with proven experience in administration, finance, and project management.

TCDG’s first mission was to assemble data on the community through resident input, census data, county consolidated plans, school board information, and other community partners firsthand knowledge. After arming ourselves with that knowledge we developed a plan based on surveys conducted by our own efforts, one-on-one community conversations, and past data published by the county. We articulate this plan in [The Four Pillars](#), our four-pronged strategy tailored to East Mims concerns. The Four Pillars consist of Affordable Housing, Educational Enrichment, Economic Development, and History, Arts, and Culture, four areas that were highlighted in the East Mims Community Surveys conducted by Brevard County in 2004 and 2019.

In 2021, after being determined a 501c3 organization by the IRS, TCDG began seeking the funding to develop affordable housing on four parcels of East Mims land owned free and clear by the company. After acquiring a fifth property on the corner of Harry T. Moore Avenue and Myrtle Avenue, TCDG was accepted into the Florida Housing Finance Corporation's Predevelopment Loan Program. Shortly after, TCDG began to work with the Florida Housing Coalition on a development plan for Tooley Oaks of East Mims – Phase I, a \$1.1M housing development project and was issued a letter of interest from the Florida Community Loan Fund.

At the close of 2021 uncertainty fueled by soaring materials costs and supply chain issues dogged the construction industry. At this time, TCDG took a step back to reassess timing and strategy. During the brief hiatus board members were introduced to State Representative Rene "Coach P" Plasencia who's pressing concern at the time was graduation rates in East Mims. After talking with Coach P, our board made the decision to shift our Education pillar to the forefront while waiting for the housing market to calm. TCDG developed and delivered a plan to Coach P which was submitted as a state appropriation request to establish the East Mims Innovation Center. Coach P's office socialized the request to Senators Tom Wright and Debbie Mayfield both of whom signed on and pushed the bill forward.

During this time board members met with the Housing Authority of Brevard County and discussed plans for the community. From this discussion a partnership was formed which resulted in TCDG being provided a newly remodeled 3,500 sq. ft. facility in the heart of East Mims, valued at over \$35,000 for the year, in which to operate educational programs. Shortly after TCDG applied for and was awarded Brevard County Community Development Block Grant Public Services Funding totaling \$66,999 to begin the East Mims Learning Center and it's first program, the Summer STEM Academy.

As the effort picked up steam an additional \$15,000 was provided by Truist Bank, the School Board summer food program signed on to provide lunches through the month of June, Coca-Cola Florida and Jacobs Technology also became partners in the effort. Lockheed Martin, CareerSource Brevard, Eastern Florida State College, NASA and others have also committed to help make the summer program a success.

Short Term - Looking beyond the summer, as with so many other organizations in the non-profit space, TCDG is currently waiting for the Governor DeSantis to sign the 2022 budget which includes the appropriation for the broader scope education programs. In a recent conversation with Senator Wright, [when he attended the grand opening block party for the learning center](#), TCDG Board members laid out the plan to establish the project at the Cuyler School and use it as a pipeline from the East Mims community into the rapidly growing Brevard County space industry offering such skills as welding, soldering, and composites supported with employability and soft skills training. When the budget is signed, Senator Tom Wright has promised to return to the East Mims area to present TCDG with the check for a half million dollars to execute that plan.

Once all the necessary pieces are in place including a lease for the Cuyler property and a signed appropriation bill, TCDG's plan is to establish a formal plan designed to perform to the State of Florida's expectations. This plan will be socialized with community residents at which time we will hear suggestions, concerns, feedback and input from stakeholders. Given Mr. Siegler's long-standing interest and work toward the improvement of East Mims, we would be pleased to hear his insights and recommendations and apply any ideas that help to further to objectives of the project and help us perform our responsibilities to the State.

Long Term – It is our belief that the Long-Term success of our projects will uplift the Mims community and be a tremendous Return-on-Investment for Brevard County. Success will be a community endeavor. The ‘Voice-of-the-Community will be sought on a regular basis and appropriately used. We will continuously review our ‘Progress-to-Goals’ in addressing the needs of East Mims and to ensure that we remain on track in meeting the community needs.

Summary

TCDG has a defined **vision** for the East Mims community. Our **purpose** is to address housing & social issues plaguing the community. We have **commitment** and capable **leadership** within the community and from political representatives to assist with funding.

Please let us know if we, or our East Mims Community Action Team can provide any further information, letters of support, or documentation that you might like from our team. We are thrilled at the potential opportunities of the proposed lease and our current vision can provide for East Mims. We have the funding, the vision, the connections, and the people to make something incredible happen in our hometown.

Thanks for the opportunity.