



LEADERSHIP PROFILE



Executive Director **Woodlawn Foundation** **Birmingham, AL**

The mission of Woodlawn United is to grow a safe and healthy community where children learn and play, families live in quality housing, parents work in stable jobs, business thrives and everyone participates in the greater Birmingham community.

--Woodlawn Foundation, 2019

BACKGROUND

[Woodlawn Foundation](https://woodlawnunited.org/)¹ was established in 2010 to serve as the community catalyst and facilitator of Woodlawn United, a comprehensive collaboration of partners committed to breaking the cycle of poverty in Woodlawn, one of Birmingham's great historic neighborhoods. In the intervening years, the Foundation, its neighbors in the community and its program partners and investors have embraced a holistic approach to community revitalization that is without precedent in Alabama.

Woodlawn and its residents have already seen significant tangible benefits from the creative collaborations the Foundation has fostered. Whether measured by

¹ <https://woodlawnunited.org/>

residents' support, the funders' commitment, or the aspirations of its partners, Woodlawn Foundation is contributing in significant ways to lasting and systemic change within a neighborhood one observer describes as "historically underfunded and underestimated." Building on the successes and challenges of its first decade, the Foundation remains more committed than ever to a safe, healthy and thriving Woodlawn community.



Woodlawn Foundation was established by Mike and Gillian Goodrich, two of Birmingham's most visionary philanthropists, who remain important champions and funders. From its beginning, the Foundation has been part of [Purpose Built Communities](https://purposebuiltcommunities.org/)², a community network driven by a collective desire to empower underserved communities in transforming themselves, ending a cycle of intergenerational poverty, and setting a new course for cities across the country.

Sally Mackin was the Foundation's highly regarded Executive Director from its earliest days. This fall, Ms. Mackin accepted another community-based leadership role in California, and thus the board has launched the current search for her successor.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Like other Purpose Built Communities, Woodlawn Foundation embraces a three-pronged approach to community revitalization:

- A first-class education system, with a clear cradle-to-college-and-career pipeline of opportunity. Examples include the new [I³ Academy](http://i3academy.org/),³ Birmingham's second charter school and, when it opens next fall, Alabama's largest; the James Rushton Early Learning and Family Success Center, pictured at right; and the Certified Medical Assistant Program offered in



² <https://purposebuiltcommunities.org/>

³ <http://i3academy.org/>

partnership with [Christ Health Center](#)⁴ and [Jefferson State Community College](#).⁵

- High quality mixed-income housing, which includes new construction as well as rehabilitation of existing properties. Examples include [Wood Station](#),⁶ pictured nearby, and the Homeowner Rehabilitation Program, which has already funded over a million dollars in repairs and upgrades for over 100 families.
- Community wellness through programs and partnerships that constitute a reliable network of family and community support services to enhance the overall quality of life for residents. Strategic partners include [Smiles 4 Keeps](#),⁷ a pioneering pediatric dentistry whose service to Woodlawn actually predates the Foundation; [Christ Health Center](#), mentioned above; and the pro bono legal help desk established in partnership with [Volunteer Lawyers Birmingham](#).⁸ Within the month, Woodlawn expects to release an app that will give residents ready access (on-line and off) to information and resources on a full array of services available to the community.



Across its work, Woodlawn pursues a multigenerational approach, engaging children, parents and grandparents to the extent practical. The Foundation's theory of change means that efforts are undertaken *with* those who call the neighborhood home, not *for* them.

In its role as community quarterback, Woodlawn serves as both catalyst and driver in pursuing a broad vision of revitalization done well and through a lens of equity and inclusion. The Foundation is staffed by a team of eleven dedicated professionals who share a commitment to place-based work and deep respect for the residents of the Woodlawn community.

The Foundation is governed by a 15-person volunteer board, comprising a vibrant mix of Woodlawn residents; civic, corporate and academic leaders; program partners; and funders.

⁴ <https://christhealthcenter.org/>

⁵ <http://www.jeffersonstate.edu/>

⁶ <https://www.birminghamtimes.com/2018/01/woodlawn-foundation-helps-create-new-affordable-housing/>

⁷ <http://smilesforkeeps.net/>

⁸ <https://vlbham.org/>

More information is available on the Foundation's [website](#).⁹ Other perspectives on the Woodlawn community are available from [Wikipedia](#).¹⁰ [Bham Now](#),¹¹ [Woodlawn Neighborhood Association](#)¹² and [Woodlawn Business Association](#).¹³

THE MANDATE

The next Executive Director of the Woodlawn Foundation will inherit a multifaceted mandate with overlapping priorities, among them:

- 1. Community engagement—within the Woodlawn neighborhood.** To be fully successful, the Foundation and its Executive Director must inspire the faith of the Woodlawn community itself. While the work requires a strategic mindset, financial acumen, and a facility for navigating complex dynamics across local, state and federal jurisdictions, it also requires personal investment in community relationships—“porch time”—reflecting a commitment to *this* community, *this* neighborhood, *these* residents.
- 2. Management.** The Foundation is not large, but it is quite complex, and the number of moving parts can be daunting, especially since direct control of Woodlawn's efforts and outcomes often rests with others. The ability to attract, retain and empower key staff is essential, as is the need to support them with clear goals, effective processes and transparent feedback. The success depends on a collaborative effort supported by sound practices.
- 3. Marketing, communications and resource development.** Woodlawn Foundation utilizes a holistic approach to revitalization. Like many organizations fostering systemic change, its story can be a challenging one to convey. As the Foundation's most visible champion, the Executive Director must be persuasive in advocating for the mission, persistent in attracting the necessary resources, and creative in developing supportive relationships. A



⁹ <https://woodlawnunited.org/>

¹⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodlawn_\(Birmingham\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodlawn_(Birmingham))

¹¹ <https://bhamnow.com/2019/04/12/birmingham-woodlawn-community/>

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/Woodlawn-Neighborhood-Association-169564686439249/>

¹³ <http://woodlawnbhm.com/>

regular program of communications with the Foundation's various constituencies, utilizing all relevant media, will be an important factor in ensuring a balanced revenue stream from a diverse set of funders, both private and public.

4. Community revitalization. Overseeing the research, planning, development and implementation of the revitalization plans is at the heart of the Executive Director's mandate. The Foundation's leader must work with the Board of Directors, Woodlawn neighbors and other leaders, partners and stakeholders to ensure broad support for and participation in Woodlawn's revitalization efforts. These efforts will necessitate the collection and analysis of relevant data (regarding housing, social services, education and the like) and collaborative engagement with community members, business leaders, educational institutions and government agencies.

The Woodlawn Foundation is facilitating true generational change. Building on the successes and lessons of its first decade, Woodlawn and the community it serves are poised for a bright and impactful future.

THE RELATIONSHIPS

The ED reports to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board of Directors, Woodlawn Foundation
And manages a staff of 10-12 through three direct reports:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chief Operating Officer• Director of Real Estate• Director of Development & External Relations
While stewarding other important relationships, such as	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Program partners & collaborators• Current and potential funders• Leaders from across corporate, academic, governmental, educational, health, nonprofit and philanthropic communities• Other leaders in the network of Purpose Built Communities• Peers in similar funds/foundations in other markets

THE CANDIDATE

Woodlawn Foundation's Executive Director must be an authentic and strategic leader who embraces a systems approach to neighborhood revitalization while embodying an accessible, collaborative style of leadership and management.

Competence: *Among other traits being sought, Woodlawn expects to hire...*

- A leader experienced in managing highly complex transactions involving multiple partners not always aligned in their immediate goals or their definitions of success
- Someone steeped in community engagement at both the institutional and individual levels
- A respectful, empowering individual who leads with candor and transparency
- A financially astute manager who has demonstrated sustainable progress towards ambitious goals in otherwise entrenched contexts
- A professional with sufficient working knowledge of Woodlawn's work for the learning curve not to be prohibitively steep
- A collaborative change manager experienced in cross-sector leadership, especially at the community or neighborhood level
- An effective fundraiser unafraid to make the ask
- An ED who respects the power of data and the individual lives and life experiences that data represents
- A natural storyteller who can hone Woodlawn's message and expand its appeal without neglecting operations, finance or programming
- A board-savvy executive energized by an entrepreneurial environment and the challenges intrinsic to such an opportunity.



A home being rehabbed with Foundation support

Culture: *We expect to attract...*

- Someone with the maturity and confidence to lead an ambitious team
- A leader with the commitment and the patience to nurture relationships comfortably at personal and institutional levels
- An ED with the ability to build effective partnerships across non-traditional lines

- A warm, personable executive with the credibility and passion to be a compelling advocate for the mission with a diverse mix of stakeholders
- A leader with the heart and head for this important work. Sensitivity to Birmingham's history and Woodlawn's potential will be important
- An engaged and engaging individual who understands and respects the power of true equity and inclusion.

Character: We seek an ED who is...

- At one with Woodlawn's vision of empowered neighbors working together
- Tenacious, decisive and respectful in pursuit of agreed-upon objectives; someone the community enjoys working with even in the face of potential conflict
- Bold, aspirational and creative in their leadership.

THE LOCATION

The Woodlawn Foundation is headquartered in the Woodlawn neighborhood of Birmingham, Alabama. The nature of the Foundation's work favors someone who can relate to and work with residents of a local historic neighborhood, but the search committee is open to culturally attuned leaders with a compelling backstory.



For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email
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or call Diane Westmore, Sam Pettway or John Sparrow at
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