

“State Use of Community-Based Organizations to Advance Urban Revitalization Policy: The Case of the Front Porch Florida Initiative”

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Marcus D. Mauldin is an assistant professor in political science, public administration, and nonprofit management at the University of Tennessee–Chattanooga (UTC). His research interests include state and local financial management, community economic development, and public management. Prior to joining the UTC faculty, Mauldin served as the director of the Office of Research and Evaluation within the Florida Department of Education’s Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement. In this capacity, he conducted research in the areas of education accountability, including school grades and educator misconduct. Before that position, he was a senior legislative analyst with the Florida legislature’s Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA). At OPPAGA, he primarily conducted evaluations of state economic development initiatives. Such initiatives included the Florida Enterprise Zone Program and the Florida Black Business Investment Board/Black Business Investment Corporations Capitalization Program. In this capacity, he had the opportunity to work closely with the Governor’s Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development and Enterprise Florida Inc., which is Florida’s economic development public-private partnership.

Summary and Findings: Community economic development is premised on the notion that community stakeholders are more attuned to neighborhood and community issues and are therefore better situated to develop solutions to those issues. The Front Porch Florida Initiative was designed to empower organizations and citizens with tools needed to revitalize neighborhoods. The initiative is part of Florida’s overall urban revitalization strategy. This paper examines how a single state uses community-based organizations to lead the charge in revitalizing urban areas. It explores community economic development through the lenses of market and government failures and places Front Porch Initiative into these contexts. The initiative minimizes these failures through a variety of services and activities. The failure theories provide a framework for understanding the roles that community-based organizations play in community economic development in response to need gaps created from the lack of government and market intervention.

Implications for Policy and Practice: This paper examines the creation and implementation of the Front Porch Florida Initiative. This initiative was designed to empower local communities to solve their own problems. The research addresses the question of whether community-based strategies, as part of a broader state revitalization policy, are an effective means for revitalizing urban communities through community economic development. The Front Porch Initiative is framed using theories of market and government failures. Doing so aids our understanding of how community-based organizations are used to correct such failures.