



# Community Resilience Initiatives:

Building Stronger Neighborhoods in Houston

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# Executive Summary

**B**uilding a more resilient city starts with building resilient communities. Houston's diverse residents and the neighborhoods they call home are the building blocks of the city and region's success. Finding ways to address their challenges and to build on their strengths is an essential step toward driving the city forward. Successfully supporting communities means acknowledging the wealth of work already happening within them through the efforts of individuals, community organizations and government agencies. It also requires addressing ongoing issues through collaborative action and by sharing information about best practices across communities. Effective efforts at the neighborhood level can be sustained and amplified by plugging into broader citywide efforts in ways that better align long-term goals and influence implementation plans at both levels.

Two ongoing initiatives from the City of Houston—the Complete Communities program<sup>1</sup> and the *Resilient Houston* strategy<sup>2</sup>—offer scaffolds for such collaboration and can aid in the broader implementation of community work. Both are working alongside residents to identify and address community-level issues and tying community-level efforts into citywide actions.

This report spotlights the work taking place in the five pilot Complete Communities to build community resilience. By documenting the processes surrounding these key community initiatives, this report identifies best practices that should underpin future work in Houston neighborhoods. Further, it documents how these efforts connect directly to the work of the Complete Communities program and the *Resilient Houston* strategy.

Drawing from the broader definition of resilience used by the Rockefeller Foundation in its 100 Resilient Cities initiative, now called the Global Resilient Cities Network, this report defines community resilience as *the ability of a*

*neighborhood and its residents to respond to and recover from both ongoing stresses and to sudden shocks they face.* As the *Resilient Houston* strategy indicates, *stresses* are daily challenges that undermine stability for an individual, a household or a city. These range from economic inequality to sea-level rise. *Shocks* run the gamut from hurricanes to sudden infrastructure failure—the immediate problems, such as Hurricane Harvey, we often associate with the need for resilience. Each Houston community faces a unique set of challenges and confronts the region's shared *shocks* and *stresses* to different degrees. See Figure 1.

Furthermore, stresses and shocks are interrelated. Although most people think of resilience in relation to *shocks*—such as flooding from Hurricane Harvey—the ability of a neighborhood to recover from a short-term shock depends in large part on how it has managed the long-term *stresses* it faces. For example, the recent explosion at Watson Grinding in West Houston not only disrupted life and damaged the homes of many living in the surrounding area, but it also highlighted the precarious

## FIGURE 1

The Resilient Houston strategy identifies 27 stresses and 13 shocks that are confronting Houston. The strategy classifies these 40 as obstacles to be mitigated or addressed as the City and its residents work toward achieving the strategy's five resilient visions for Houston's future. (Shocks are bolded)

1. A Healthy Place To Live
  - Crime and Violence
  - Chronic Disease
  - Environmental Degradation
  - **Extreme Cold**
  - **Hazardous Material Emergencies**
  - Mental/Behavioral Health
  - Poor Air Quality
  - **Public Health Emergency**
  - **Terrorism**
2. An Equitable, Inclusive, and Affordable City
  - Disparities in Health
  - Education Access
  - Economic Inequality
  - Environmental Injustice
  - Food Access
  - Inequity
  - Linguistic Isolation
3. A Leader in Climate Adaptation
  - Climate Change
  - **Drought**
  - **Extreme Heat**
  - **Flooding**
  - **Hurricane**
  - Sea Level Rise
  - **Severe Weather**
  - Subsidence
  - Urban Heat Island Effect
4. A City That Grows Up, Not Out
  - Displacement
  - Homelessness
  - Housing Affordability
  - Pedestrian Safety
  - Public Transportation Access
  - Urban Sprawl
  - Population Growth
5. A Transformative Economy that Builds Forward
  - Aging Infrastructure
  - **Cyberattack**
  - **Economic Crisis**
  - Lack of Economic Development
  - Energy Transition
  - **Infrastructure Failure**
  - **Oil and Gas Downturn**
  - Slow Recovery from Harvey

financial position of a number of those residents who were basically left homeless by the blast and without the means to repair their homes.<sup>3</sup> Residents in many neighborhoods experienced a similar situation after Hurricane Harvey.

Each of the initiatives explored in this report is directly helping one of the case study communities better prepare for or address their current challenges. After the description of each initiative, the effort is explicitly linked to the shocks and stresses it is helping address. Pointing to the importance of addressing chronic issues, almost every ini-

tiative included here is mainly targeting stresses. By tackling the daily issues faced in the case study communities, these efforts are helping improve the lives of residents and prepare them to face future shocks.

The report is organized by six common challenges drawn from the Complete Communities action plans completed in the five pilot communities. Initiatives that are taking on these challenges are grouped and explored in depth in each section. The common challenges include:

1. Need for broader, more effective community engagement and community-informed decision-making
2. Need to build capacity for residents, community leaders and community organizations
3. Lack of quality affordable housing and the growing risk of displacement
4. Lack of mobility options and unsafe community streets
5. Food insecurity and the lack of access to fresh foods
6. Dearth of economic development and job-training opportunities

Reflections on the highlighted community efforts and their ties to broader city programs highlight several key takeaways that can help build successful efforts at the community and citywide levels in the future, these include:

- **Build capacity for resident leadership.** Community efforts have to be supported with resources for capacity building among residents.
- **Provide financial support to community initiatives.** Organizations with effective ideas are struggling to expand without financial support.
- **Undertake community plans and public engagement in every community.** Long-term engagement efforts are essential to shaping actions that have local buy-in. Localized plans should acknowledge and incorporate efforts that have come before and respond to the unique circumstances of individual communities. Existing community-level planning efforts, such as the Go Neighborhood Quality of Life Agreements, can be blueprints for future iterations. But, an expansive and sustained community-planning effort must connect to official efforts, whether that be a Complete Community action plan for every community or another official vehicle. This would establish a consistent approach to establishing steps for community-level implementation and allow community plans to tie more directly into broader action plans and goals.
- **Provide residents with accessible technical information.** Engagement efforts too rarely provide residents with understandable technical information, yet they ask residents to weigh in on highly technical projects. Ensuring that residents can understand technical information and have support from organizations with technical expertise can create more meaningful engagement.
- **Support and develop community-level coordinating organizations.** Having community organizations that can operate as “community quarterbacks” to coordinate efforts, convene stakeholders and marshal resources is beneficial.
- **Establish collaborations.** Collaborations allow community organizations access to more resources and opportunities to enact change. Collaborations also offer the best way to foster shared learning across neighborhoods. Collaborations with public agencies can help embed existing actions into ongoing city programs.

# Introduction

In recent decades, resilience has come to mean many things to different people and different communities. Typically, resilience is defined as bouncing back from natural disasters or other acute shocks, such as Hurricane Harvey. But, driven in large part by the work of the Rockefeller Foundation’s 100 Resilient Cities program, now the Global Resilient Cities Network, the term has moved beyond a focus on major disasters to include long-standing existing stresses such as unequal infrastructure investments or economic inequality, which often are laid bare by large-scale events.<sup>4</sup> Underlying stresses negatively affect a community’s ability to bounce back from disasters. Some neighborhoods—usually those with more economic and political resources—don’t have to contend with underlying stresses and, consequently, have an easier time navigating recovery. Because communities are the building blocks of the larger city or region, local efforts and citywide undertakings must be tied together to address both the acute shocks and ongoing stresses at the community level.<sup>5</sup>

Drawing from the broader definition of resilience used by the 100 Resilient Cities program, community resilience here is defined as the ability of a neighborhood and its residents to respond to and recover from both ongoing stresses and the immediate shocks they face. This entails improving quality of life for all residents by allowing them to contribute, thrive and live stable lives in their neighborhoods. First and foremost, this requires communities and residents to be empowered with enough capacity and resources to identify risks and work to address them at the community level. In many cases, this work begins with addressing underlying stresses, which in turn helps set a stronger foundation to respond to and recover from shocks. It is crucial, though, that localized efforts are built collaboratively alongside broader public initiatives.

The City of Houston’s current work with the *Resilient Houston* strategy and the Complete Communities program, both of which seek to strengthen communities and amplify successful programs and actions across the city, is a good example of critical bridges between the neighborhood and regional action. The *Resilient Houston* strategy highlights a wide range of stresses—from economic inequality to rising sea levels—and shocks—from hurricanes to sudden infrastructure failure—the city and its residents are facing. See Figure 1 in the Executive Summary. The Complete Communities program has helped create action plans that target pressing challenges in five pilot communities—Gulfton, Second Ward, Third Ward, Acres Homes and Near Northside.

This report examines ongoing work to increase resilience in Houston neighborhoods by aligning community- and city-level initiatives. Highlighted within it are several initiatives being used in the Complete Communities' pilot neighborhoods to address six major challenges identified in each Complete Community's action plan and through stakeholder interviews—the need for additional community engagement, the need for capacity building, the lack of affordable housing, unsafe streets and a lack of mobility options, food insecurity, and the lack of economic opportunities.

Each initiative explored is directly helping one of the case study communities better prepare for or address their current challenges. After the description of each initiative, the community effort is explicitly linked to the *Resilient Houston*-identified shocks and stresses it is helping address. Again, the majority of the initiatives featured are addressing underlying stresses, rather than acute shocks. Mitigating stresses shores up a community's ability to respond and recover from shocks. At the end of each challenge section, the report connects the community-led efforts to the actions and programs proposed by the Complete Communities program and the Resilient Houston strategy.

## Community resilience in Houston

### City Efforts

The City of Houston is currently leading two efforts that tie closely to community resilience and provide critical touchpoints for the goals of this report: The Complete Communities program and the *Resilient Houston* strategy.

Complete Communities was launched in 2017 to direct city intervention into community-level improvements and programming. Unlike previous efforts that sought to spread incremental improvements across the majority of neighborhoods, Complete Communities focuses on a subset of neighborhoods and aims to undertake comprehensive improvements there. In each Complete Community, all work begins with a community action plan created through direct engagement with residents and community stakeholders. As of December 2019, the city had designated 10 Complete Communities, and each of the program's five pilot communities had a completed action plan.

The Complete Communities effort has amplified existing community work and set up a blueprint to establish new efforts. By identifying specific communities to work in, the program focuses resources, research and attention

on the neighborhoods and their individual circumstances. A great deal of the effort of the Office of Complete Communities has been marshalling resources and facilitating partnerships across the city and with outside partners, both philanthropic and corporate, to bring to bear on community efforts. The office then works with these partners on priorities identified as essential to transformational change through the action plan process.

The *Resilient Houston* strategy provides a blueprint for the city to follow as it builds up resilience at every level and across multiple areas—from flooding to economic opportunity. Led by the Houston's chief resilience officer (CRO), the strategy is part of the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities program, which is now the Global Resilient Cities Network. It explicitly calls out the neighborhood level as one of five critical scales—along with individuals, bayous, city and region—where actions should be taken and where critical connections need to be made. The strategy provides actions within and across these scales aimed at helping Houston realize five major visions for its future:

1. A Healthy Place to Live;
2. An Equitable, Inclusive and Affordable City;
3. A Leader in Climate Adaptation;
4. A City that Grows Up, Not Out;
5. A Transformative Economy that Builds Forward.

The strategy is already being implemented and presents an important opportunity for community-level investment. Several of the community-led initiatives identified in this report mesh seamlessly with the *Resilient Houston* strategy and can be amplified through it. Likewise, by connecting with the strategy, stand-alone community efforts can be tied into broader implementation goals.

The Office of Complete Communities and the CRO have begun coordinating efforts. For example, the CRO has begun a conversation about flood resilience interventions in Kashmere Gardens, which is one of five Complete Communities currently completing an action plan. The work is part of *Resilient Houston's* Living with Water report<sup>6</sup> and the overall strategy's implementation steps as well as a key component of Kashmere Gardens' Complete Community action plan process. Combining the efforts means residents will have access to critical technical information and have a venue to shape input about future priorities. Also, the Complete Community action plans and *Resilient Houston* strategy are coordinating the

strategies and action steps they are taking. For example, the resilience assessment—a document that established a foundation for the larger strategy development—has directly connected the first five Complete Community action plan project ideas with potential a comprehensive view of resilience in order to inform potential actions in *Resilient Houston*.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of each section of this report, the community efforts that are highlighted will be tied to pertinent strategies from the *Resilient Houston* strategy and to projects and issues featured in the five existing Complete Community action plans. These connections will be drawn at a high level and readers should go directly to the action plans and *Resilient Houston* document for more information.<sup>8</sup> Showing the connections between the community- and city-led initiatives creates the opportunity for both sets of efforts to build together, broaden their reach and leverage resources more effectively.

### **Community-based organizations and neighborhood planning**

Work done at the community level underpins almost every broader resilience initiative. No citywide effort will succeed without buy-in from communities. Likewise, building capabilities of an individual neighborhood to respond to its own challenges and tying those efforts into broader action items can improve a city's framework of resilience.<sup>9,10</sup> Community-level success is dependent on a strong network of community-based organizations that work with residents to build social infrastructure and resident capacity.

These organizations are critical to supporting communities in their efforts to address underlying stresses and chronic issues. Community-based organizations unite communities behind common causes and build on existing resident assets.<sup>11</sup> They also support the development of local leadership and bring new opportunities for community members to engage in local decision-making processes.<sup>12</sup> While any discussion of resilience must reflect the upper levels of decision-making, it must also link those high-level decisions to the community and the individual. Community-based organizations are also vital because they allow local communities to identify key priorities and unrealized opportunities for fostering positive neighborhood change. Local organizations play an outsized role in strengthening communities and building the capacity of well-informed, dynamic residents, while also unlocking new opportunities now and in the future.<sup>13</sup>

Community organizations are able to coordinate residents, which improves engagement in local decision-making processes, including community planning. It is essential that neighborhoods throughout Houston engage in a localized planning process. When community leaders, residents and other stakeholders take stock of a community's existing strengths, while also noting persistent challenges and weaknesses, they can ensure the community is prepared in the face of future risks. The ongoing efforts of the Complete Communities and the *Resilient Houston* strategy provide a good starting point to shape such planning.

This report presents an opportunity for communities, leaders and elected officials to identify meaningful opportunities and resources at the community-level, bolster collective identity and cohesion through action, and navigate conflicting short-term and long-term goals in the ongoing process. As all Houston communities work toward a shared goal of long-term resilience, the report serves as a place to house actionable, localized information in one place for other communities to learn from and reference as they build capacity. It is intended to equip all Houstonians with an understanding of some of the tools, resources and programs they can leverage in response to the unique set of issues they face in their lives.



# Challenge 1: Engaging communities through planning and decision-making processes

**I**n a city as large and diverse as Houston, engaging residents in their own space and on their own time can be difficult. And as the city's population continues to grow and diversify, language barriers and gaps in technical knowledge also can limit the ability of different Houstonians to engage in the public process. However, involving residents and community organizations in the development of the engagement process and in the earlier stages of planning will make them more likely to succeed. Involving residents, who are best able to identify a community's most pressing challenges, enables them to shape programs that address those stresses and promotes buy-in that sets the stage for future work.

Historically, in Houston and other cities, public officials have tended to view public engagement as a short-term, “check-the-box” step within a larger project.<sup>14</sup> However, this minimizes the input of residents and usually fails to include more marginalized populations in the process.<sup>15</sup> To counteract these limitations, public engagement needs to be continuous and long-term. However, empowering residents to have meaningful participation in planning, requires providing technical information that is accessible for all, which means translating the information into multiple languages.

Decision-makers must also recognize that communities can and do take matters into their own hands when it comes to the challenges they face.<sup>16</sup> Rather than ignore or overlook this, local officials should do more to empower such actions, engage directly with those looking to positively impact their communities and endorse local initiatives by incorporating them into official action and support.

*The following community-based initiatives are indicative of the valuable role that civic engagement plays in building community resilience. They showcase ways in which deci-*

*sion-making capabilities can effectively be brought to the people—along with it the technical information needed to effect positive change. They also highlight the importance of capacity building and community buy-in to long-term resilience, by setting communities up to address both long-term stresses and potential future shocks.*

## LISC Great Opportunities (GO) Neighborhoods program and Quality of Life Agreements

### Description

Launched in 2009, the Local Initiative Support Coalition's (LISC) Great Opportunities (GO) Neighborhoods program is a place-based community planning and revitalization initiative that brings together community stakeholders and residents to assess neighborhood challenges.<sup>17</sup> The program aims to forge relationships between key city, neighborhood partners and community residents to develop implementable strategies for future planning and development.

GO Neighborhood targets “communities of potential” and neighborhoods with active civic organizations that do not currently work together.<sup>18</sup> Once selected to participate,

LISC supports and connects local organizations, residents and community-based institutions to address challenges including affordable housing, income inequality, economic opportunity, education and health equity—all of which contribute to a higher quality of life.

### Process

LISC's GO Neighborhoods program espouses consistent, long-term community engagement in order to identify a set of priorities and create a neighborhood Quality of Life Agreement (QLA). The QLA includes plans for implementing Early Action Projects (EAPs) to improve the long-term quality of life of neighborhood residents.

LISC provides participating communities with resources, leadership training and structural expertise to facilitate and organize numerous gatherings among community stakeholders and other local partners central to the planning process.<sup>19</sup> The community also identifies a Convening Agency to serve as the neighborhood intermediary throughout the process—from planning to implementation—and a Community Coordinator, funded by LISC, who offers technical support and brokers relationships between city and regional partners.<sup>20</sup> Once the contents of the QLA are established by the community, LISC follows up with financial support such as loans, grants and assistance in identifying additional resources to actualize the community's Early Action Projects (EAP).<sup>21</sup>

To equip resident leaders with the skills and resources needed to increase community engagement, advocacy and implementation of QLA strategies, LISC runs an annual Leadership Development program that focuses on one social determinant of health (health and housing, health and environmental justice, health and transportation, etc.) across four tracks: Trainer for Trainer (T4T), Leading Together (L2T), Ambassadors Class and Civic Academy. Dovetailing with the QLA process, this program further strengthens neighborhood networks, supports and equips new leaders with the tools and language to act and contribute to a broader roadmap of actionable steps that transform communities.

LISC's goal for both programs in the short-term is to enhance inter-community collaboration and residential capacity. Over the long-term, each community QLA plan will guide revitalization and resilience while improving the overall quality of life for residents in target neighborhoods.

### Near Northside Quality of Life Agreement

Following a one-year listening campaign, LISC selected the Near Northside community to participate in one of the first rounds of its GO Neighborhoods/QLA program.<sup>22</sup> Over the course of a year, LISC helped bring together more than 230 community members representing various institutions, community groups and civic organizations from all across the Near Northside.<sup>23</sup> In 2010, the neighborhood's QLA was completed, outlining short-term projects and long-term goals to guide the future growth and development of the neighborhood. The QLA was based exclusively on continued feedback from community members who participated in the process.

LISC and Near Northside selected Avenue, a nonprofit community development corporation that supports the development of affordable housing and community revitalization, as the Convening Agency.<sup>24</sup> LISC and Avenue kicked off the process with a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of the neighborhood based on interviews with more than 100 residents and stakeholders. This interactive analysis helped LISC, Avenue and the community better understand the key priorities and common challenges confronting the neighborhood and its residents.

Throughout 2009, Avenue, LISC and other community-based organizations, facilitated five community engagement sessions central to the GO Neighborhoods process:<sup>25</sup>

With input from community members at each session and additional support from the University of Houston's Community Design Resource Center, the Near Northside QLA highlighted 40 strategies across nine categories, including Early Action Projects. The QLA was designed to provide Near Northside with a vision of an attainable future in which all residents can live full and prosperous lives.<sup>26</sup>

Between 2010 and 2015, in support of the initiatives laid out in the neighborhood's QLA, \$53 million was invested by a range of Near Northside community partners to support the EAPs and build nearly 260 new homes.<sup>27</sup> GO Neighborhoods continues to have a positive impact on the community, as evidenced by the award-winning update to its original QLA in 2015.<sup>28</sup> For Near Northside, LISC's GO Neighborhoods program has shown that "even neighborhoods without great influence or wealth have the capacity to acquire the voice and power to implement great change."<sup>29</sup>

## Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

The GO Neighborhood initiative in the Near Northside touches on several *Resilient Houston* shocks and stresses that limit the resilience of the area. The QLA addresses these shocks and stresses by designing programs to tackle the issues and by connecting residents and organizations with resources to carry them out. The immediate stresses faced by the community include:

- Economic inequality
- Linguistic isolation
- Housing affordability
- Displacement
- Inequity
- Disparities in health

## Emancipation Economic Development Council

### Description

The Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC) was formed in 2015 by multiple community organizations and residents active in the Emancipation Corridor of the Third Ward. Convened as an effort to organize a response to issues of redevelopment and gentrification, the group identified several key issues, including economic development, political empowerment, employment, historic and cultural preservation and housing. The EEDC meshes institutional representatives such as churches and non-profits with heavy involvement from residents and civic clubs. The organization became an official 501(c)3 nonprofit after several years of informal organization and with the support of the Kinder Foundation has begun to execute on a number of programmatic and policy efforts aimed at addressing key issues.

### Process

Early on, the EEDC efforts were led by multiple local institutions, including Project Row Houses, Sankofa Research Institute and several Third Ward churches. The EEDC enlisted support from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Department of Urban and Regional Planning, which sent a class of graduate students to work with EEDC leaders to shape priorities and actions.

EEDC participants then formed workgroups that would target four key areas: housing and community land trusts, political empowerment, Emancipation corridor redevelopment for community wealth building and partnerships with anchor institutions for community

wealth building. A key element of the group's momentum was its commitment to building capacity and trust among neighbors through long-term engagement with local institutions and officials. The organization also worked with MIT to produce a full strategy and planning document that could provide ideas about how to move forward with identified actions.<sup>30</sup> Representatives from the University of Houston's School of Architecture and from Texas Southern University's Urban Planning and Environmental Policy Department also provided expertise to the subcommittees. The resident, local institution and technical expert connections meant discussions were informed by a deep pool of knowledge formed from the academic and professional expertise of the research partners, as well as the real-life experience of residents.

The EEDC began supporting strategies outlined in the MIT report such as helping to organize and launch a new civic club. They also hosted a facilitated conversation and public meeting about anchor institution support of economic development and employment. In the housing arena, the subcommittee focused on the community land trust idea and was instrumental in helping the City of Houston conceptualize and form a citywide trust in 2018. All of this initial work was conducted by community volunteers, a common practice that can also be a challenge because often it leads to burnout among overtaxed volunteers. It was therefore critical that the EEDC was able to secure resources to hire paid staff.

The financial support of the Houston Endowment and the Kinder Foundation, which funded the Emancipation Community Development Partnership (ECDP), helped to provide a foundation for the EEDC to grow. The ECDP was a parallel entity that helped further flesh out plans identified in the EEDC's work. Studies were commissioned from Sankofa Research Institute, the Kinder Institute for Urban Research and the Baker Institute for Public Policy. The EDCP also undertook additional planning efforts in the community. The early work of the ECDP and EEDC set the stage for the formal establishment of the EEDC as a nonprofit. The Kinder Foundation and the Surdna Foundation funded programmatic work of the EEDC via Project Row Houses before the formalization of its nonprofit status. Since then, the Kinder Foundation has continued to support the EEDC, particularly its economic development programs, some of which are explored further in this report.

### Ties to Resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

The EEDC promotes a planning process that encourages residents' participation and enables them to shape interventions that address the central stresses identified by the community. As a nonprofit that can receive foundation support, the EEDC can bring resources and implementable plans that help address these stresses:

- Economic inequality
- Housing affordability
- Displacement
- Inequity

## The Northern Third Ward Neighborhood Implementation Project

### Description

The Northern Third Ward Consortium was formed in late 2015 to centralize the efforts of the many stakeholders in the Third Ward and lead a participatory planning effort in the neighborhood. The consortium was first composed of the following local organizations: Change Happens, Change Happens CDC, Project Row Houses, Row House CDC, the University of Houston, Wheeler Avenue Triangle Ministries, Inc., and the William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity. Consortium members chose Change Happens CDC as the lead agency during a 10-month planning process that was funded by the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation. Implementation of the plan began in July 2018.

### Process

With support from a steering committee, Change Happens CDC led a planning process that enabled community members to develop a long-term strategy to address structural challenges, select priority projects and ensure more-equitable development in the neighborhood going forward. The steering committee has overseen implementation of the plan since its completion and today is responsible for partnering with key stakeholders and local decision-makers to make the plan's priority projects a reality.

The goals of the Northern Third Ward Neighborhood Implementation Project (NTWNIP) were similar to that of LISC's GO Neighborhoods program—build and strengthen the sense of community, educate residents about existing resources, threats and opportunities, and empower the community to affect change on their own through neighborhood planning, inclusion and advocacy.

It covers five major areas critical to the future development of the neighborhood: housing, neighborhood building, economic development and workforce, education,

and families, children and seniors. For each area, the plan outlines and identifies priority recommendations, including target partners, time-frames, projected costs and potential funding mechanisms to provide the community with an actionable path forward.

Furthering its approach to capacity development, the NTWNIP recommended establishing a block captain or neighborhood watch group to encourage resolution of neighborhood issues through community stewardship. A designated block captain would also distill information about available community resources and promote safety and security through consistent community engagement. In response to the recommendation, the implementation team created the Third Ward B.I.G. (Block Improvement Group) to encourage residents to act as community leaders.

After the release of the plan, including presentations to government agencies and early implementation efforts by the steering committee, Mayor Sylvester Turner's Complete Communities initiative lent additional credence and support to the plan's priority projects. Since 2018, the steering committee has been instrumental in the implementation of an *Education in the Third Ward* resource guide, a *Housing Empowerment Workshop* to help those impacted by eviction and the *Third Ward Summit*. The latter led to the establishment of the *Third Ward Health Collaborative*, which was featured in the Third Ward's Complete Communities Action Plan.

### Ties to Resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

Engaging residents and encouraging their involvement in the planning process, including involvement on committees and in the block captain program, has improved communication channels and the coordination of residents in addressing chronic stresses. This participation also builds residents' capacity to take on new roles in future efforts to tackle new issues or sudden shocks. More effective communication and the provision of information also aids community resilience. The education committee's resource guide, for example, gives families a chance to connect to systems that can support their needs and improve the educational achievement of students. As with the other initiatives in this section, the community planning process has helped bring needed financial resources to the Northern Third Ward to support programs.

- Economic inequality
- Housing affordability
- Education access
- Inequity





Credit: Community Design Resource Center

Greens Bayou resiliency workshop.

## Greens Bayou Watershed Analysis and Resiliency Planning project

### Description

In the wake of Hurricane Harvey, multiple local underwriters funded the creation of the Greater Houston Flood Mitigation Consortium (GHFMC). The group consisted of research entities from several Texas universities and stand-alone think tanks, as well as LISC's Houston office. The consortium's objective was to create collaborative, impartial science and research that could help identify key flooding issues and shape responses to them. A central goal of GHFMC's work was to make findings accessible not only to elected officials and bureaucrats, but also to residents. The GHFMC produced dozens of reports, briefings and other documents that have played a central role in post-Harvey recovery and planning efforts. One of its final achievements was the Greens Bayou Watershed Analysis and Resiliency Planning project, which stands out for the way it weaved together public participation of community leaders and technical expertise.

### Process

The Greens Bayou project was a collaboration led by the University of Houston's Community Design Resource

Center (CDRC) and Rice University's Severe Storm Prediction, Education and Evacuation from Disaster (SSPEED) Center, with support from the Rice Kinder Institute for Urban Research. The project plan included combining detailed hydrological modeling and engagement with key community leaders and potential policy interventions to create resilience plans for four communities located within the Greens Bayou Watershed. The four communities—Greenspoint, Aldine, Eastex Jensen and Kashmere Gardens—have been heavily impacted by flooding problems. Historically, the watershed as a whole has had fewer investments in flood control improvements than other areas in the region. However, post-Hurricane Harvey funding and action by Harris County in prioritizing its bond funds have ensured that the watershed would be in line for future investments. The Greens Bayou Watershed Analysis and Resiliency Planning project intended to create a plan for each community that would help in advocating for desired outcomes. The technical watershed analysis would also ensure community leaders were armed with the data and information they needed to support particular projects or approaches.

The technical and community outreach worked hand-in-hand, with each element informing the other throughout the process. The SSPEED Center initially undertook a thorough examination of the watershed, documenting where existing flooding was occurring and identifying where areas of concern seemed to be. Technical work was then fact-checked in workshops with key community leaders and other stakeholders. The community leader workshops were also used as a way to solicit input about potential infrastructural and policy interventions. Ahead of a second workshop, SSPEED modeled a round of mitigation options and showed what impact each would have on flooding in the communities. The CDRC created a list of potential design interventions that were presented alongside the mitigation information.

### Ties to Resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

The feedback gathered from workshops and the technical modeling information were compiled into community resilience plans that are sharable with elected officials, relevant city departments and residents of the communities.<sup>31</sup> Connecting neighborhood leaders to technical information and the experts who produce it allows residents access to tools they need to advocate for better projects in their community. And the approach presents a productive model that can be used beyond the Greens Bayou study and the issue of flooding. The Greens Bayou project address several shocks and stresses:

- Environmental injustice
- Inequity
- Climate change
- Aging Infrastructure
- Slow recovery from Harvey
- **Flooding** (Bold denotes a *Resilient Houston* shock)

### Challenge 1: *Resilient Houston* Tie-ins

- Chapter Two: Safe and Equitable Neighborhoods
  - Goal 4: We will ensure that all neighborhoods have equitably resourced plans.
    - Action 12: Support equitable neighborhoods through community planning and programs
- Chapter Four: Accessible and Adaptive City
  - Goal 12: We will advance equity and inclusion for all.
    - Action 40: Reach all Houstonians through equitable community engagement

### Challenge 1: Complete Communities Tie-ins

- Complete Community Action Plans:  
The action plan process itself is a direct tie-in for these examples.
- Civic Engagement: Build Community Capacity & Strengthen Civic Organizations
  - Acres Homes: *Create a Complete Communities Neighborhood Toolbox*
  - Third Ward: *Create a Mobilization Team to Identify Ways to Share and Improve Resources Across the Neighborhood*
  - Third Ward: *Organize an Annual “State of the Third Ward” Summit*

# Challenge 2: Building capacity by empowering communities, residents and their leaders

**T**he Complete Communities program recognizes the value that leadership training can bring to underrepresented communities. Notably, all five Complete Communities identified leadership as a challenge to capacity building and long-term resilience. Specifically, the community action plans call for new programming to nurture and empower the next generation of leaders to support the future livelihood of the community.

While leadership training programs are crucial for decision-making bodies in underrepresented communities, it's equally important to build the capacity of residents through education, training and information. Empowering both underrepresented communities and their leaders can help improve the quality of life of those long overlooked. Furthermore, empowered residents who tackle existing stresses gain important experience that prepares them for taking larger roles in addressing sudden shocks in the future.

Programs that provide communities with the tools they need to thrive, whether through effective leadership and representation or educational opportunities that boost individuals' capabilities on a day-to-day basis, strengthen the city's social infrastructure. Social infrastructure is a vital bulwark and network that can be tapped into in times of crisis such as the major flooding that occurred with Hurricane Harvey and Tropical Storm Imelda.

*The following have been successful in providing leadership training and educational opportunities to underrepresented communities. Each has sown the seeds for communities and residents to come together and build local capacity among themselves and on behalf of others while ensuring all residents remain invested in the long-term livelihood of their community, their fellow neighbors and the entire city.*

## Texas Organizing Project (TOP)—Boards and Commission Leadership Institute (BCLI)

### Description

The Boards and Commission Leadership Institute (BCLI) is a community leadership development program created by the national nonprofit Urban Habitat.<sup>32</sup>

The nonprofit identifies partner organizations that lead efforts at the local level and recruit experienced social justice advocates from low-income communities and communities of color for the BCLI fellowship program.<sup>33</sup> Over six months, the BCLI fellows learn to navigate complex and intersecting policy arenas, understand the culture and language of commissions and build strong relationships with the residents and leaders of the communities they serve.<sup>34</sup>

In Houston and Dallas, the local BCLI program is run by the statewide advocacy organization Texas Organizing Project (TOP).<sup>35</sup> TOP works with communities across the state to improve the lives of low-income and working-class families through community organizing and civic and electoral engagement.<sup>36</sup> In Houston, TOP provides training, leadership development and public education for community organizers and puts leaders on the ground to help empower low-income communities throughout the region.<sup>37</sup>



## Process

TOP relies on BCLI participants to help determine which issues to focus on in local communities—ranging from economic development to housing and education. Fellows also improve their advocacy and leadership skills by learning effective communication and negotiation techniques.<sup>38</sup> Most importantly, fellows are taught the inner-workings of regional and local government and how to better navigate the system and its power structure, which makes them more effective champions for the underrepresented communities they represent.<sup>39</sup>

Recognizing that local boards and commissions across Texas overwhelmingly are composed of white males, TOP's BCLI program actively recruits, supports and trains women of color who are interested in serving on local boards and commissions.<sup>40</sup> After completing the fellowship, TOP helps place graduating fellows on boards and commissions in Houston and tasks them with bringing race and class to the forefront of local and regional policies and plans.

## Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

The BCLI improves the representation of women, people of color and low-income minorities in local leadership structures where decisions are made on behalf of communities and neighborhoods. Involving residents in these decisions ensures better representation and can help address pressing community needs before they get worse.

- Economic inequality
- Housing affordability
- Education access
- Inequity



Avenue Texas Legislative Advocacy Day.

## Avenue Leadership Academy and Advocacy Fellowship

### Description

Avenue runs the Avenue Leadership Academy and the Advocacy Fellowship program, which focus on residents in the Near Northside and Northline neighborhoods who want to develop skills to advocate for their neighborhood at Houston City Council meetings, in the Texas Legislature and elsewhere. Recently, both programs have been instrumental in bringing increased transparency and awareness to the expansion plans for the Hardy Toll Road and I-45.

### Process

Avenue launched its Advocacy Fellowship in 2019 with Advocacy 101, Policy 101 and Legislative Visit workshops. Initially funded by the BUILD Opportunity Fund, the program provides participants with a stipend to complete training and coursework to strengthen their effectiveness as advocates at the local and state levels. Advocacy fellows receive one-on-one support and coaching beyond the program's courses in general public-speaking techniques, topic-specific advocacy (health, safety, transportation, etc.), and methods for navigating municipal and state legislative structures. To put their learning into practice, Avenue coordinated a visit to Austin for the fellows in early 2019 to advocate for a Healthy Northside Agenda during the 86th Texas Legislative Session.

In 2017, Avenue began running monthly leadership training seminars and skill-building workshops as part of the Avenue Leadership Academy program.<sup>41</sup> Quarterly, Avenue runs interactive public seminars and

training sessions to help community members better facilitate public meetings, write agendas and speak publicly. Local resident leaders also get to design the curriculum for each public workshop.

Notably, Avenue Leadership Academy participants have provided Avenue with a pool of potential candidates for the national Community Leadership Institute (CLI)—an annual, invitation-only training event run by NeighborWorks Network. Avenue's leadership trainings and the national training from CLI were instrumental in the establishment of the Near Northside's Department of Transformation, a community group that is re-orienting the conversation around street safety and civic engagement in the neighborhood.

Credit: Avenue



## Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

Avenue's Advocacy Fellowship and Leadership Academy both recognize the leadership potential of residents in the Near Northside. As such, both programs further empower residents who are dedicated to their community by offering opportunities for individuals to build capacity together while becoming more effective leaders on behalf of themselves and their neighbors. Together, effective leaders can do more to improve quality of life by helping to create programs and secure funding that address stresses faced by their community, and in turn, better prepare for unforeseen shocks. In Avenue's case, residents have called for health disparities, unsafe streets and environmental injustice to be addressed.

- Economic inequality
- Housing affordability
- Inequity
- Poor air quality
- Pedestrian safety
- Linguistic isolation
- Environmental injustice

## CHAT: Building capacity for immigrants and refugees in Gulfton

### Description

CHAT, or Culture of Health-Advancing Together, was founded in Gulfton in 2015 to address the myriad challenges faced by immigrant and refugee groups in Houston.<sup>42</sup> The founder set out to better understand how acculturation, or lack thereof, impacts health and physical activity. With the goal of building a healthier community and improving self-sufficiency for a population that is often left to fend for itself, CHAT works to connect with and build bridges between the refugee and immigrant communities of Gulfton and the Greater Houston population.<sup>43</sup>

### Process

Despite having one of the largest immigrant and refugee populations in the United States, Houston offers little in terms of assistance beyond the initial period of resettlement.<sup>44</sup> CHAT was founded in 2015 to fill this gap and work closely with Gulfton's growing immigrant and refugee population. The system as it exists today does little to provide the stability new immigrants and refugees need to adjust



Credits: CHAT

to new cultural, social and political surroundings. For refugees, in particular, the process of resettlement can be difficult and isolating.<sup>45</sup> Fortunately, in Gulfton's community-based organizations, local schools and nonprofits are working to build immigrant capacity through education and cultural programming for adults and children alike.<sup>46</sup>

CHAT participates in this work through targeted outreach, educational programming and cultural events that foster well-being and self-sufficiency among Gulfton's immigrant and refugee populations. Rather than hand out resources, CHAT offers language education and long-term support as an opportunity for refugees and immigrants to build capacity on their own.

CHAT also offers Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs in area HISD schools to empower immigrant and refugee girls who recently have arrived in the U.S. These girls—most of whom have little or no English proficiency and limited formal education—can have trouble effectively dealing with the stresses of acculturation, which can result in poor academic and social behavior. Since their parents also are dealing with adjusting to American culture, these students often have no one to provide them with guidance. CHAT's services have been particularly beneficial in this regard.

CHAT facilitated one of the first Complete Community actions by creating the Gulfton Story Trail Mural Project with the support of a grant from the Houston Arts Alliance and the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs.<sup>47</sup> The project features a guided cultural tour of the community, connecting both visitors and residents to art, restaurants and other community sites. This effort exemplifies the importance of cross-department collaboration in order to support community-level action.

### Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

Isolation, which is particularly problematic in times of crisis, is an ongoing challenge for Gulfton's immigrant and refugee population. Without strong, reliable social networks and communities, accessing necessary services during a flood or heatwave can be difficult for populations experiencing isolation.

CHAT programs help address these challenges and support households in issues with education, public services and health care. Supporting vulnerable families and helping them work toward self-sufficiency makes the whole community more resilient.

CHAT also collaborates with other agencies in administering surveys to elevate the voices and lived experiences of this diverse community, and to help inform future priorities and collaborative solutions on behalf of the community.



Gulfton Story Trail Mural.

Credit: CHAT

- Linguistic isolation
- Economic inequality
- Inequity
- Disparities in health
- Education access
- Mental and behavioral health

### Challenge 2: Resilient Houston Tie-ins

- Chapter One: Prepared and Thriving Houstonians
  - Goal 1: We will support Houstonians to be prepared for an uncertain future.
    - Action 4: Encourage community leadership, stewardship and participation.
- Chapter Four: Accessible and Adaptive City
  - Goal 12: We will advance equity and inclusion for all.
    - Action 40: Reach all Houstonians through equitable community engagement.

### Challenge 2: Complete Communities Tie-ins

- Civic Engagement: Nurture Community and Civic Leaders
  - Acres Homes: *Build Leadership Capacity*
  - Gulfton: *Nurture Community Leaders and Create a Youth Council*
  - Near Northside: *Provide Leadership Training*
  - Third Ward: *Expand Youth Leadership Opportunities*

# Challenge 3: Quality affordable housing & displacement

**H**ousing stability is a challenge faced by residents and communities across Houston, as highlighted by all five communities included in the Mayor's Complete Communities initiative. Having access to an ample supply of quality, safe and affordable housing options is essential to providing the stability individuals need to live full, thriving and healthy lives. A community's housing supply should be dense and diverse enough to accommodate its residents, who have a range of income levels and housing needs. Access to employment opportunities, educational institutions, grocery stores, health care resources and other vital community assets is critical for building wealth, individual capacity and long-term economic mobility, and factors into the quality of housing. The absence of such housing is a shared stress across multiple city neighborhoods, one that, if addressed, can pay huge dividends for households and the city.

Issues such as rising land values, exposure to flood risk and ineffective code enforcement are making the provision of safe, affordable homes harder.

First, rising land values in Houston are making the development of new, affordable homes more difficult. Values are rising quickly in walkable, downtown-adjacent and inner-city neighborhoods that are in demand. For many lower-income, minority neighborhoods, including some Complete Community neighborhoods such as Near Northside that border high-growth communities like the Heights, spillover land-value increases are effecting supply. Development in lower-value areas is increasing pressure on residents as rising land values translate to higher rents and property tax bills for households on fixed budgets or with low incomes. There is also a concern about the harmful effects underlying stress can have on the health of residents who feel the constant threat of displacement.

Second, in early 2019, the Greater Houston Flood Mitigation Consortium released its *Affordable Multi-Family Housing: Risks and Opportunities* report. Utilizing floodplain maps and inundation models from FEMA and comparing to parcels maps in Houston, the report indicated that 26% of Houston and Harris County's multi-family units are vulnerable to flood events.<sup>48</sup> The nearly 165,000 multi-family units that are located in flood-prone sections of the region are home to nearly 475,000 renters—a number only expected to grow as the region's floodplain maps are updated.<sup>49</sup> Finding places to build safe homes will become increasingly difficult in the years ahead.

Third, in some of Houston's communities, most notably Gulfton, the supply of affordable housing is severely impacted by concerns about quality and safety. During the Complete Communities initiative, Gulfton-area leaders highlighted the fact that many of the area's multi-family apartment complexes are in disrepair or overcrowded.



Few meet the needs of families with children, lacking playground equipment or easy access to park space.<sup>50</sup> Providing homes that are safe and accommodate families' needs is critical.

*The following programs, initiatives and organizations showcase the way in which communities are tackling issues that limit access to high-quality affordable housing. From local anti-displacement measures to new building typologies that can house long-term residents, they represent opportunities for Houston to bring much-needed stability to its diverse neighborhoods and improve quality of life.*

## Introducing new housing ideas into the discussion—Near Northside

### Process

In spring 2019, Jesús Vassallo, an assistant professor of Architecture at Rice University, and his graduate students used the Near Northside as a case study neighborhood in their effort to design new multi-family housing forms that could add gentle density to the community and also fit into the existing neighborhood context. Their primary goal was to produce a catalog of housing prototypes that would fill the gaps of a housing stock that is polarized between a baseline of single-family houses and much larger apartment complexes, with very few housing options in between. Vassallo and his students consulted with the City of Houston's Housing and Community Development Department to ensure they understood the design requirements for multi-family construction, and researched the parameters required for housing developments to qualify for public funding at the Federal, state and city

levels. They also spoke with multiple neighborhood organizations and local developers about the market and the situation of the neighborhood.

The results, explored in greater detail below, provide a set of models created by a group with expertise that can be the foundation for broader conversations. As in many other fields, residents come with critical personal experiences and local knowledge, but often do not possess the level of expertise or professional skills required to fully participate in a discussion around a topic like housing. However, partnering with groups such as the Architecture schools at Rice or the University of Houston, or with design and architecture firms, offers residents an avenue for influencing design with their local knowledge. Structuring a process in which residents have influence over the next steps by accessing information and resources provided by professionals can empower communities to shape their futures, rather than react to circumstances simply presented to them.

### Housing designs

#### Interlocking townhomes

This design by Ashley Whitesides takes advantage of the Near Northside's relatively deep lots to offer a set of two-story, interlocking townhomes (Figure 1). By using the typical 50-by-100-foot lot size, the typology promotes an ad-hoc development strategy in which housing can be deployed gradually as lots become available. Each lot can fit four townhomes, quadrupling the density without building an out-of-scale home (Figure 2). Parking for the homes would be underneath, thereby limiting the foot-

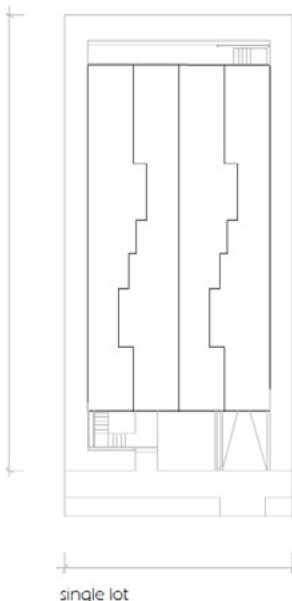


Figure 1.



Figure 2.





Figure 3.

print and preserving as much space as possible for the pedestrian realm and green space.

In addition to mirroring a similar porch (see figure 3)—a feature of many existing homes in the neighborhood—the project creates the possibility for shared plazas between neighbors—a nod to the Near Northside’s deep community ties—by opening up the back part of the townhome lots into a shared green space. (see figure 4)

The interlocking townhome proposal is also additive. It can operate as a single project of four homes or, on bigger lots, include multiple sets. As the rendering in Figure 4 shows, it could also be pursued on multiple adjacent lots and be interspersed among single-family homes.

#### Four-pack Duplexes

Keyla Bia proposed creating sets of four duplexes on lots throughout the community. Again, no more than two stories and 23 feet wide, the duplexes could be built on two lots—moving them from two units to eight.

The units would share a driveway and have an interior cut-through plaza, again prioritizing open space and opportunities for neighbor-to-neighbor interaction. As with the interlocking townhomes, the design allows for cars to be parked off-street and to reduce the number of curb cuts required.

This approach also creates an opening for an important ownership model. Households could purchase the whole building and rent out the bottom floor, creating a revenue generator for residents.



Figure 4.

#### Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

The Vassallo studio provides tangible ideas about how to address housing issues in the Near Northside through designs that are connected to the current built environment and informed by community input. Similar to the participatory planning examples in section 1, this effort provides technical information to residents who otherwise would not have access to it. Feasible home designs in the hands of community-based, non-profit developers can help provide a template to bring more affordable housing into a community without displacement or major character changes.

- Housing affordability
- Displacement
- Economic inequality



Figure 6.



Figure 7.

## East End Unidos and the Community Land Trust Model

### Description

Formed in 2014 as the East End Collaborative, East End Unidos is a coalition of East End residents and institutions working to empower residents in the community and unite efforts in ways that help address housing, food security and citizen engagement issues.

The East End Collaborative began with a small LISC grant that was intended to help coordinate non-profit service-provision efforts in the community. Once the initial grant ended it was difficult to maintain momentum without financial resources. The effort was reinvigorated when residents and leaders from a smaller number of institutions began to meet regularly on their own. The organization has not been directly supported by grants since the original LISC grant.

From its conception, the issue of housing was a major focus for the group. Like many other communities where a close proximity to downtown and its amenities have contributed to rising home values, residents in the East End are concerned about maintaining access to affordable homes. They are also eager to prevent the displacement of long-time residents due to rising property taxes. The group has focused on learning more about the community land trust (CLT) model as an approach in the East End.

### Process

East End Unidos began to investigate the possibility of bringing a community land trust to the neighborhood in 2018, around the time that the City of Houston officially announced it would be creating a land trust. The organization viewed the land trust as an approach that meshed well with the circumstances of the community, especially

for its ability to address the need for permanent housing affordability for long-term residents.

Community land trusts operate by taking ownership of a property and then “leasing” the home back to a tenant for 99 years. In effect, the lease is the purchase of the improvements and home. The homeowner makes payments and accrues equity on the home, just as they would with a traditional mortgage. However, because the community land trust owns the land, the property tax burden is reduced and the home remains more affordable for the owner.

When owners leave a community land trust home, they sell it to a new owner or back to the trust. The new sales price is limited to a certain percentage increase to ensure future residents can afford the home and the previous owner still gains some equity. Over time, trusts bring multiple properties into their holdings in an attempt to maintain the affordability of an entire neighborhood. In most cases, the homes in a land trust are income-restricted in order to ensure they continue to serve low-income families.

In 2018, Unidos worked with the city to consider the model and share information with residents. The group conducted drive-throughs with city officials to tour the neighborhood and held informal meetings with civic associations to discuss the model. They also coordinated an East End community land trust event with the city’s Housing and Community Development Department to educate residents about the CLT model. Over 100 residents attended the training. These types of trainings are essential because the land trust approach is a big departure from traditional homeownership models.

Unidos plans to continue working with the Houston Community Land Trust and the Housing and Community Development Department to continue level-setting con-



Credit: East End Unidos.

East End Unidos Convening.



Credit: East End Unidos.

East End Unidos Convening.



versations about the land trust model and its fit for the East End. These efforts will build from the early stage implementation of the Houston Community Land Trust homes in Acres Homes.

### **Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed**

The community land trust approach is a model that presents a real opportunity to create and maintain affordable housing over for many years to come. Because the property tax burdens are effectively removed from the homeowner, the overall cost of housing is far less burdensome. With the decreased housing costs, households are then able to address other costs and stresses. The model can help provide a base of stable, affordable housing from which additional units can be built up.

- Housing affordability
- Displacement
- Economic inequality

## **Center for Civic and Public Policy Improvement Affordable Housing Operations Center**

### **Description**

The Center for Civic and Public Policy Improvement (CCPPI) was organized in 2012 by State Rep. Garnet Coleman. The group works in affordable housing, criminal justice, health care and education. In the real estate realm, the CCPPI staff consists of people with expertise in ushering projects from start to finish—from financing to development. The CCPPI works on behalf of the Midtown Redevelopment Authority (MRA) TIRZ #2 and development partners to ensure projects are feasible and in line with the Southeast Affordable Housing Initiative, a 10-year plan created by the CCPPI under contract with MRA.

Residents and organizations in the Third Ward have been working to address issues around affordable housing and redevelopment pressure for decades. Midtown TIRZ and community institutions such as churches, own a great deal of property in the Third Ward. Midtown TIRZ land must be used for affordable housing, according to state law. To plan for the use of their land, the Midtown TIRZ commissioned a housing plan in 2017 from the CCPPI.<sup>51</sup> The CCPPI is attempting to create a housing hub that can bring housing actors together and help coordinate plans, services and development.

### **Process**

The affordable housing operations center building, will combine office, affordable housing and community space. A key goal of the office space is to bring together organiza-

tions operating in affordable housing and related services that address the social determinants of health with the goal of ensuring that efforts are coordinated and that a range of expertise is available for residents and developers to access.

This center model is building from a model employed by the Southeast Houston Management District in the construction of its 5445 Almeda Building in the 1990s. That building houses multiple entities working to improve the lives of Greater Third Ward residents, including the CCPPI, the management district and multiple nonprofits. The 5445 Almeda office building has a bank as an anchor tenant and the CCPPI building is aiming to replicate that model and bring a bank into the heart of the Third Ward to be an anchor tenant for its building. In many ways, the CCPPI effort parallels those of the TWRC, “The Cloth” (of Third Ward), EEDC and Northern Third Ward projects. Whereas those efforts have spent a great deal of time working to build the capacity of residents, the CCPPI effort aims to do the combination of initiatives with institutional and organizational partners.

Working directly with the Southeast Houston Management District, the building is being developed on land acquired by Midtown TIRZ, with OST/Almeda Redevelopment Authority TIRZ #7 offering lending support, and will be the first to comply with the Texas Main Street program that is in development now in the Third Ward.

### **Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed**

The CCPPI proposal to coordinate plans and organizations attempting to address housing issues aims to aid in streamlining the housing process and help residents navigate an oftentimes complicated system. The operations center model aims to provide residents, builders and funders a single stop to facilitate the development of homes and place residents in them. The success of this effort could help increase the supply of affordable, safe homes and address a central underlying stress that many households currently face.

- Housing affordability
- Displacement
- Economic inequality

## **Gulfton Green**

### **Description**

Gulfton is the most densely populated area in Houston. And the vast majority of residents live in large apartment complexes. Since many of those complexes are privately owned, there is significant risk that naturally occurring affordable housing could be lost if redevelop-

ment pressures come to the community.<sup>52</sup> Overall, the area lacks access to parks and green space. Attempts to open access to existing green spaces on school grounds or other properties via the SPARK program have been successful at Jane Long Academy and YES Prep Gulfton.<sup>53</sup> But, despite those endeavors, access remains limited and existing parks are taxed by overuse and lack of maintenance.<sup>54</sup> Further, accessing the existing green space can be a tenuous proposition because high-speed traffic, a lack of sidewalks and large roadways make Gulfton's streets dangerous for residents.<sup>55</sup>

Gulfton is also home to a large number of social service institutions and nonprofits that serve its sizeable refugee and immigrant population. For years, these organizations have been working diligently with residents to address shared concerns. Many of those social service providers are located in the blocks around the intersection of High Star Drive and Hillcroft Avenue. Legacy Community Health, the Alliance for Multicultural Community Services, the City of Houston's Southwest Multiservice Center and Express Public Library, and BakerRipley all have a presence near the intersection. Connect Community is a nonprofit that builds partnerships across institutions to bring new infrastructure, programs and amenities to the area. In its December 2018 revitalization plan for the area, the nonprofit identified the "Gulfton Green" at High Star and Hillcroft as an ideal spot to build new greenspace, housing and workforce initiatives.<sup>56</sup>

## Process

Through the Gulfton Green idea, Connect Community is working with community stakeholders to reimagine one of the most oft-visited corners of the Gulfton community, and the de facto center of Gulfton life, into a more vibrant, walkable and community-centered area. The goal is to

leverage the existing investments and city-controlled land to create this hub. The overall vision is to connect service providers through a redesign of an unused green space into a multi-use park with green 'fingers' connecting to new high-quality mixed-income housing, neighborhood-inspired retail, a tech/maker incubator, an expanded library and structured parking to replace surface-lot parking. This vision of what the neighborhood center could be is highlighted in the revitalization plan proposing the Gulfton Green idea as a way to tackle several resilience challenges at once—consolidating resources such as parking into a central facility could open more land for other uses and coordinating among existing anchors could lead to improved services and more efficient use of resources. The Green idea was reached after a nearly year-long engagement process undertaken by Connect Community and its partners to understand the needs and desires of Gulfton residents. The Connect Revitalization Plan and the Complete Communities Action Plan highlight many of the same challenges and lay out a number of possible ways to address them by building on its strengths.

The housing element of the proposal is critical and is the catalyst for all future development. The revitalization plan suggests building multiple high-quality multi-family buildings controlled by a mission-driven organization that will preserve the affordability of those homes over time.

The remaking of the land around the central space could also ripple out to the surrounding area. Safety improvements both to High Star Drive and Hillcroft could significantly increase pedestrian safety and help residents gain access to a new hub. Currently, the City of Houston is pursuing safety improvements through a road redesign along Hillcroft to support multimodal transit options.

This effort can connect into and benefit from ongoing efforts such as the Houston Bike Plan and the Beyond the Bayous work of the Houston Parks Board. Ideally, the pilot redesign of Hillcroft will include dedicated bike lanes that will connect to the Hillcroft Transit Center to the north, and a bike lane in the median south of Bellaire on Hillcroft will connect to the Braes Bayou bike system.

Since publishing the revitalization plan in December 2018, Connect Community has continued to convene the requisite actors and advance the discussion of the Gulfton Green concept. Negotiations are underway for Phase I housing with a planned submission for city funding in March 2020.



Credit: Gulfton-Sherwood Revitalization Plan, December 2018.

Possible Gulfton Green.



### Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

Proposals such as the Gulfton Green present the opportunity to cement collaborations that are able to tackle multiple challenges. Having a central coordinator such as Connect Community that can bring multiple stakeholders together to act on a given plan or set of priorities is critical. The Green concept itself is an iteration of addressing multiple needs and could be a model emulated in other areas to bring services, housing and recreation into a single space. Such consolida-

tions can save money, help residents address multiple issues at the same time, attract additional investments and make a more welcoming, connected and walkable neighborhood.

- Housing affordability
- Displacement
- Economic inequality
- Disparities in health
- Environmental injustice

## Challenge 3: *Resilient Houston Tie-ins*

- Chapter One: Prepared and Thriving Houstonians
  - Goal 3: We will improve safety and well-being for all Houstonians.
    - Action 9: Shelter and house any Houstonian in need
- Chapter Two: Safe and Equitable Neighborhoods
  - Goal 4: We will ensure that all neighborhoods have equitably resourced plans.
    - Action 13: Accelerate investments in inclusive housing and neighborhood development
  - Goal 7: We will build up, not out, to promote smart growth as Houston's population increases.
    - Action 21: Create a citywide comprehensive housing plan with neighborhood-specific recommendations
    - Action 22: Promote the need for safe, secure, and affordable homes and transportation access for all Houstonians.
    - Action 24: Protect and strengthen neighborhoods through appropriate infill development
- Chapter Four: Accessible and Adaptive City
  - Goal 11: We will modernize Houston's infrastructure to build forward and address the challenges of the future.
    - Action 36: Advance and modernize building codes and standards

## Challenge 3: *Complete Communities Tie-ins*

- Housing: Build New Housing and Secure Existing Housing
  - Acres Homes: *Strengthen Existing Community Development Corporations (CDC) and Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDO), or Create a New Organization*
  - Gulfton: *Improve the Quality of Life in Area Apartments*
  - Near Northside: *Develop a Program to Acquire and Restore Existing Single- and Multi-Family Housing to Increase Affordable Housing*
  - Second Ward: *Support Training and Education for Home Renovation and Locally Sourced Material Exchanges*
  - Third Ward: *Utilize Tools to Secure Long-Term Housing Affordability and Prevent Involuntary Displacement*

# Challenge 4: mobility, street safety and public space

## Regional Challenges

Providing and maintaining access to safe transportation and pedestrian infrastructure is a major challenge for communities across the Houston region. Perceived and real threats to personal and public safety inevitably impact quality of life and limit access to opportunity—especially for low-income, marginalized communities.

While the city has made substantial strides in improving the reach of its transit network in recent years, most visibly the 2015 revamp of its bus network,<sup>57</sup> the expansion of its light rail system,<sup>58</sup> the passage of the bike plan and the recent approval of the MetroNext initiative,<sup>59</sup> Houston's regional transit system remains undeniably auto-centric. And this remains a significant barrier for the nearly 1 million Houstonians who lack easy access to a personal vehicle.<sup>60</sup>

In 2018, LINK Houston, a nonprofit organization that advocates for equitable access to public transportation services and safer pedestrian and bike infrastructure in the

Houston region, released its *Equity in Transit: 2018 Report*, lending further credence to the ongoing mobility challenges faced by communities in an auto-centric city.<sup>61</sup> LINK's report specifically draws attention to the existing gaps and disparities present in Houston's public transit network.

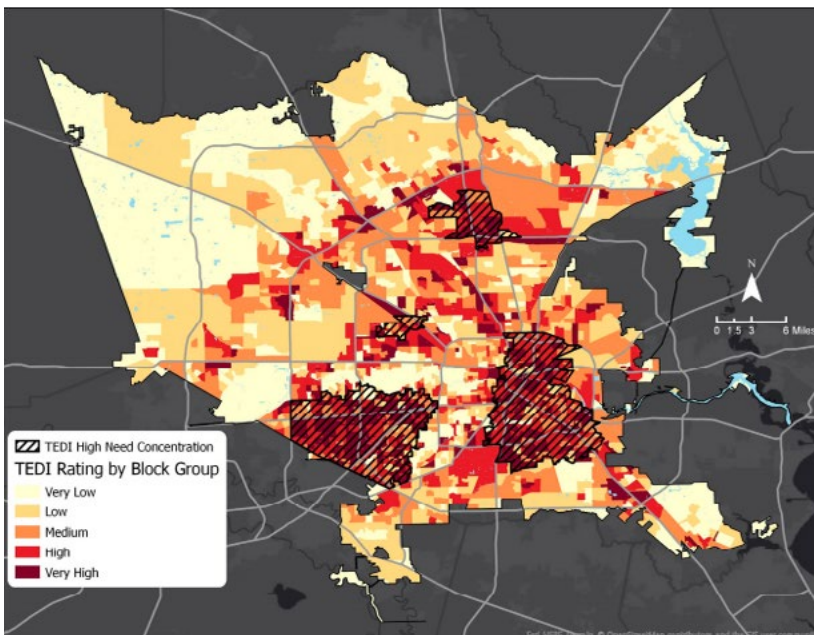
As indicated in the map above, LINK identified large sections of Houston where safe, affordable transit options are most in need to improve quality of life and access to opportunity. Notably, some of these high-need areas overlap with Complete Communities.

## Community-level challenges

Limited access to safe, affordable public transportation, as LINK's report identified, is especially burdensome for residents in the five pilot neighborhoods of the Complete Communities Initiative. All five communities are home to a higher percentage of public transit users and a lower percentage of personal vehicle ownership than the citywide average. And while many of these communities are current-

ly served by Metro transit services, all five expressed a need for improvements to both street and transit infrastructure to enhance public safety, mobility and access to opportunity.

Since many Complete Community residents walk to reach public transportation stops, jobs, schools and other destinations across the region, pedestrian safety is especially challenging in these neighborhoods. In fact, recent studies have shown that the perception of safety on neighborhood streets, whether due to the physical conditions of the built environment or the prevalence of criminal activity, limits access to key public amenities such as grocery stores, schools and community centers.<sup>62</sup> Whereas well-designed sidewalk infrastructure can promote safe pedestrian activity while impeding unwanted activity, such as crime.



High Transit Need Areas.

Credit: LINK Houston, *Equity in Transit: 2018 Report*

*Ranging in scope from the regional to the neighborhood-specific, these initiatives are bolstering community resilience and building collective capacity by connecting the disconnected, improving access to opportunity for overlooked communities and ensuring public safety to improve the quality of life for all residents.*

## Kinder Institute Street Safety Audits— Gulfton + Near Northside

### Description

In 2018, the Kinder Institute for Urban Research released a street-safety study using resident input and historical crash data that identified dangerous intersections and locations in Gulfton. Many of the neighborhood's most dangerous sections for pedestrians were concentrated where social services, schools and large apartment complexes were co-located.<sup>63</sup> Results from this initial study were shared with community groups and advocates for street safety and spurred the Kinder Institute's Sidewalk Audit Project, which focused first on pedestrian safety in Gulfton. The Gulfton work was used by the Super Neighborhood, LINK Houston and Connect Community to advocate for additional attention to street safety along Hillcroft Avenue. This work has since been completed in Near Northside and preliminary work has been conducted in Independence Heights.<sup>64</sup>



### Process

In the 2018 street-safety report, the Kinder Institute surveyed nearly 300 residents at multiple community events. The complete sidewalk and street conditions audit of the Gulfton community was conducted shortly thereafter. The Kinder Institute developed a questionnaire to guide volunteers through the street-by-street audit. The audit tool was developed in conversation with several groups, including the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), Metro, Traffic Engineers Inc., the City of Houston, Bike Houston and others active in the pedestrian and bike-safety realm.

The Kinder Institute, with on-the-ground support from volunteers from the community and partner organizations, as well as from Rice University students, inventoried the presence and quality of pedestrian and bike infrastructure in the Gulfton community utilizing the in-house questionnaire.<sup>65</sup> The goal of the audit was to leverage the data gathered to provide community stakeholders and civic leaders with a guide for future investments in pedestrian-oriented infrastructure.

The audit revealed that although residents of Gulfton have some access to sidewalks in major streets and around public places like schools, many of the sidewalks are either disconnected or have some type of obstructions.<sup>66</sup> The study also found that though Gulfton is relatively walkable and is well served by Metro, there are areas in the neighborhood where safety issues related to both crime and traffic are challenges. The information collected in the two reports informed the formulation of a public-private partnership between the City of Houston Office of Complete Communities and Department of Public Works with Together for Safer Roads, which aimed to invest in education and infrastructure improvement on problematic streets in the community.<sup>67</sup> As a part of this work, Connect Community used support from Together for Safer roads to fund an internship program in the summer of 2019. In the program seven high school students worked with Traffic Engineers Inc. to conduct analysis and data collection that would support the updating of the intersection.

### Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

The street audits provide usable, accurate information to residents about the availability and conditions of both walking and biking infrastructure. This information can then be deployed by residents to argue for public investments to improve public safety, enhance mobility and boost connectivity. Safe, reliable infrastructure is crucial for any community but is particularly important in neighborhoods



such as those featured in the Complete Communities initiative, where residents are more likely to opt for alternative forms of transportation. Not only do these improvements guarantee public safety and promote alternative modes of transportation, they also improve connectivity between neighborhoods, allowing residents better access to opportunity. The street safety studies are intended to be a tool that can be reproduced in other communities.

- Public transportation access
- Pedestrian safety
- Disparities in health
- Aging Infrastructure

## Safe Walk Home—Near Northside

### Description

Although residents in the Near Northside have expressed concerns about street safety since the introduction of the light-rail corridor in their neighborhood, the tragic murder of 11-year-old Josue Flores in 2016 brought pedestrian and street safety to the fore.

Shortly after Flores' death shook the Near Northside community, Stella Mirelles-Walters mobilized a group of community members who were concerned with student and pedestrian safety as well as the growing presence of crime in the neighborhood.<sup>68</sup> Over the past four years, Mirelles-Walters' grassroots organization, now named Safe Walk Home, has been instrumental in rebuilding the frayed relationship between local law enforcement and the community. Safe Walk Home volunteers are trained to keep a steady eye on the street before, during and after school hours to help ensure students travel safely to and from school. As a testament to the success of Mirelles-Walters' movement, there are ongoing conversations to



Safe Walk Home Volunteers.

Credit: Safe Walk Home.

Let's keep the Near Northside shining bright!



As your neighbor—and the company that keeps the Houston's 173,000 streetlights energy efficient and maintained—we're proud to keep the Near Northside shining bright.

It's easy to report streetlight outages.

Bookmark <a href="http://CenterPointEnergy.com/Streetlight" style="color: white;">CenterPointEnergy.com/Streetlight</a> in your smartphone or save 713-207-2222 to your contacts.	When you see a light that's out or pole that's damaged, write down the pole number (best) or the address where the pole is located.	Share this information with us by using a short online form or calling Customer Service.
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Crime & Safety Committee, Super Neighborhood Council No. 51

SafeWalk Home/Northside

[safewalkhome.northside@gmail.com](mailto:safewalkhome.northside@gmail.com)



CenterPoint Energy Public Service Announcement via Safe Walk.

bring Safe Walk Home to nearby Northline neighborhood. There also have been talks to bring a similar organization to a neighborhood in San Antonio.<sup>69</sup>

### Process

With initial support and guidance from Avenue, local churches and community centers, Safe Walk Home began with a conversation between local police officers and concerned families. The goal of the conversation was first to help rebuild the trust that had been lost between the community and local law enforcement while generating ideas for how the community could improve street safety, especially for students like Flores.

Serving as a liaison between law enforcement and the greater community, Mirelles-Walters began by facilitating additional conversations and training seminars around the community to empower local residents to take personal safety and street safety into their own hands. Today, Safe Walk Home's training, which is the focus of the movement, teaches community members what suspicious activity should be reported, how to identify suspects, who to call to report suspicious activity and how to follow up to ensure law enforcement is responsive to the community when needed. As a reminder of their presence in the community and ongoing success in addressing public





Credit: Kyle Shelton

safety concerns, Safe Walk Home also distributes yard signs to community members.

Though born out of tragedy, Safe Walk Home has found success in its dedicated leadership, its ability to rebuild frayed relationships with local law enforcement and its capacity to remain relevant beyond the general meetings and training sessions by establishing a presence at all community events in the neighborhood and beyond.

In 2017, Safe Walk Home was even instrumental in helping the Texas legislature pass SB195.<sup>70</sup> This new law created even more opportunities for school districts to guarantee the safety of students who live within 2 miles of home through safe busing and other pedestrian-safety initiatives.

Today, Safe Walk Home is in conversation to expand its reach beyond Near Northside in Houston and around Texas, and has plans to further expand locally by introducing new programs to further empower the community, including first-aid training and a self-defense class for women.

### Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

Feeling safe on the street, at home, at school and elsewhere in the community undoubtedly impacts quality of life. Residents who feel unsafe outside the home, whether out of fear of criminal activity or due to the lack of safe, reliable sidewalk and crosswalk infrastructure in the public realm, risk further isolation from the community. Safe Walk Home is working to create safe spaces in the public sphere and to give residents the tools and skills to ensure their own safety and that of others.

- Pedestrian safety
- Disparities in health
- Aging Infrastructure
- Education access

### Houston Department of Transformation (DOTr)—Near Northside

#### Description

The Houston Department of Transformation (DOTr) is a Near Northside-based organization dedicated to creating safe streets in Houston. DOTr is guided by the tenets of tactical urbanism, which blends community engagement and low-cost, unofficial interventions to make immediate improvements in the built environment. By showcasing what can be done in the built environment with very little investment, tactical urbanism is intended to guide the future decisions of local agencies and decision-makers.

#### Process

In October 2017, Avenue invited eight Near Northside community organizers to the Community Leadership Institute (CLI) in Los Angeles—a three-day training event for residents active in their community to strengthen



Credit: Department of Transformation

DOTr in Action.





Credit: Department of Transformation.

DOTr in Action.

advocacy skills, share best practices and learn from one another. At the retreat, teams work on an action plan for a community-based project and receive a small grant to help kick-start implementation of their proposed projects.

The Near Northside group identified pedestrian/bike safety, community beautification and crime as the biggest challenges facing the community. The group identified three intersections in the neighborhood where a new approach could be employed to effect change:

1. Lorraine and Elysian: Identified as a problematic intersection because of its residential nature, proximity to an elementary school and use as a high-speed traffic cut-through—the intersection is also well-known in Near Northside as the site of a young boy's traffic-related death.

2. Hardy and Harrington: A long-neglected area known for speed-induced accidents, crime, drugs and prostitution.
3. Fulton and Quitman: A busy intersection in the neighborhood that's located near a middle and high school, and is within walking distance of a MetroRail—a zone with high pedestrian activity.

Rather than wait for city officials to make changes at these intersections, DOTr members engaged the community and used tactical urbanism to take matters into their own hands. DOTr showed the community that even small changes can have a positive impact on street safety. Gathering together families, children, community leaders and support from the Salvation Army, the group cleared away sidewalks that had been blocked by overgrowth for years, created a pop-up bike lane in partnership with BikeHouston and spray-painted crosswalks to ease pedestrian and car traffic.

Although many of the temporary interventions disappeared over time, the event itself showcased that change was possible and that an empowered community can take action through community service. DOTr has transformed into an advisory organization showing other neighborhoods in Houston that tactical urbanism is not only affordable and accessible, but effective in raising political awareness around local issues and public safety.

### **Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed**

DOTr, in espousing techniques of tactical urbanism, empowers local community members to take action to make neighborhood changes on their own. The actions of DOTr participants help reclaim and reactivate public space and improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists and improve quality of life. The incremental changes made by DOTr are also supporting long-term projects that preserve some of the safety and infrastructure improvements they have prioritized.

- Pedestrian safety
- Disparities in health
- Aging infrastructure

## Challenge 4: *Resilient Houston Tie-ins*

- Chapter One: Prepared and Thriving Houstonians
  - Goal 3: We will improve safety and well-being for all Houstonians.
    - Action 8: Make our streets 100% safe for all Houstonians
- Chapter Two: Safe and Equitable Neighborhoods
  - Goal 6: We will ensure that all neighborhoods are healthy, safe and climate-ready.
    - Action 18: Ensure all neighborhoods have access to quality parks and nature
  - Goal 7: We will build up, not out, to promote smart growth as Houston's population increases.
    - Action 22: Promote the need for safe, secure, and affordable homes and transportation access for all Houstonians
    - Action 23: Invest in transit-oriented and trail-oriented development
- Chapter Four: Accessible and Adaptive City
  - Goal 11: We will modernize Houston's infrastructure to build forward and address the challenges of the future
    - Action 35: Equitably advance complete streets implementation to build resilient roads
- Chapter Five: Innovative and Integrated Region
  - Goal 15: We will coordinate regionally to increase transportation choice
    - Action 48: Work with regional partners to invest in an integrated mobility network
    - Action 49: Improve first and last mile connections
    - Action 50: Enable Houstonians to make mobility choices that improve well-being and reduce the cost of living

## Challenge 4: *Complete Communities Tie-ins*

- Mobility and Infrastructure: Create Safe Streets
  - Acres Homes: *Identify and Prioritize Pedestrian and School Crosswalk Projects*
  - Gulfton: *New and Improved Sidewalks*
  - Second Ward: *Enhance Street Safety*
- Safety: Create Safe Spaces and Develop Strong Partnership with Law Enforcement
  - Near Northside: *Develop Strong Partnerships Between Neighborhood Initiatives, Such as Safe Walk Home, and Area Law Enforcement to Expand Neighborhood Safety Initiatives*
  - Third Ward: *Address Crime Hot Spots Throughout the Community*

# Challenge 5: Food Insecurity and Community Health

**A**ccess to healthy, fresh food is a challenge for several Complete Communities. In fact, according to Douglas Schuler and Balaji Koka's report published by the Kinder Institute, *Challenges of Social Sector Systemic Collaborations: What's Cookin' in Houston's Food Insecurity Space*, an estimated 724,750 individuals are food insecure in the Greater Houston area.<sup>71</sup> This equates to a food insecurity rate of 16.6%, which is roughly 4% above the national average.<sup>72</sup> Roughly 500,000 Houstonians live in areas that meet the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) criteria for food deserts—neighborhoods where the closest grocery store is more than 1 mile away.<sup>73</sup>

Many areas of Houston do not have immediate access to a quality full-service grocery store; most notably, Complete Community neighborhoods such as Third Ward and Second Ward. This can become more burdensome for residents who don't have access to a vehicle to get to grocery stores, farmer's markets and other food outlets in nearby neighborhoods.

For Second and Third Ward, food options are extremely limited, leaving many families with little choice but to rely on fast food that, on the whole, provides unhealthy food options. Overtime, this can lead to long-term health problems such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease, and can lower overall quality of life.

Without a neighborhood grocery store or supermarket, residents are forced to go to other neighborhoods to buy fresh food. This also means that local dollars that could have been spent within the community to support of local food establishments and grocery stores are instead spent in stores outside of the community.

*Food and health insecurity are linked to and strengthen the hold of inequality on communities and neighborhoods. They limit opportunities for children and families to access foods that will help them live full, healthy lifestyles. In areas with-*

*out access, this impacts public health and can have long-term effects on residents' quality of life. The following initiatives recognize these challenges and are actively building food security into the neighborhoods they represent and serve.*

## Growing Roots East End Network Collaborative—GREEN Collaborative

### Description

The Growing Roots East End Network Collaborative (GREEN Collaborative) is an effort in the East End to promote growing, distributing and eating locally sourced foods that are fresh and healthy. In 2017, Episcopal Health Foundation funded several Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC's) in the area via their Community Health Homes initiative to engage the FQHC's in addressing social determinants of health in their respective communities. El Centro de Corazón, an FQHC, was once of its recipients. As a result of this investment, the GREEN Collaborative was born. The primary drivers of this effort are Finca Tres Robles, El Centro de Corazón Health Center, Urban Harvest Farmers Market, numerous public school campuses and several other neighborhood institutions and residents.



GREEN Collaborative is working to strengthen existing gardens and establish a number of community gardens at schools across the neighborhood. By doing so, this will enable students to work in, gain exposure to and have access to the process of growing and eating healthy foods. The organization hopes to train students to organize and run the gardens. As a health care provider, El Centro de Corazón, sees the GREEN Collaborative as an opportunity to improve long-term health outcomes by engaging students early.

### Process

Finca Tres Robles, one of the only urban farms in Houston, provides fresh food to the East End community. From its beginning, the farm's operators have viewed their effort as one that supports additional projects oriented toward connecting food, health and quality of life. In addition to Urban Harvest, Finca Tres Robles has offered education and support to local community gardens to supplement the work of each garden's volunteers.

The group started with the idea of getting healthier options into as many existing elements of the food systems and institutions as possible—schools, corner/convenience stores and restaurants. By working with the existing institutions, the group hopes to make choosing healthy foods easier than choosing unhealthy ones.

The involvement of Centro de Corazón as a health care provider in this effort is the primary link in the effort to connect healthy foods, education, social services and urban farming. Finca Tres Robles also plays a critical role in the effort to expand the urban-farming network in the neighborhood. These foundational partnerships are critical to grounding the effort while getting support and long-term community buy-in for these efforts.

### Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

A food system that improves access to healthy food options is crucial to the long-term health, stability and livelihood of the communities in which they are anchored. By tying together community engagement with healthy living, the GREEN Collaborative's urban farming program helps build a network of food providers in a neighborhood that is currently underserved. More so, the foundational role that El Centro de Corazón and Finca Tres Robles plays anchors the entire programs, building community buy-in and ensuring the success of the program. By engaging directly with students early in the process, GREEN Collaborative is doing more to build long-term health outcomes and healthy eating habits among the community's youth. Taken all together, this



Credit: GREEN Collaborative



Credit: GREEN Collaborative



Credit: Green Collective

GREEN Collective Projects



effort helps actualize a healthier, more resilient future for the Greater East End and its residents.

- Food access
- Inequity
- Economic inequality
- Disparities in health

## Acres Homes Health Action Team/ Farmer's Market

### Description

The Acres Homes Health Action Team (AHHAT) is a direct offshoot of the Acres Homes Complete Community action planning process. The group emerged as a working group during the Complete Communities process, after residents and stakeholders identified health and lack of access to fresh foods as major concerns for the community. Acres Homes is one of several areas in the city where fresh food and a quality grocery store are hard to access. The Complete Communities Action Plan identified the implementation of a farmer's market as one of the first actionable steps to be taken. Not only does a market provide a venue for fresh food, but it offers a venue to support local businesses. Increasing healthy foods at existing corner stores and encouraging the establishment of more community gardens were other strategies that the action plan suggested. AHHAT has been the entity that pursued that work over the past two years.

### Process

The AHHAT began working toward implementing a market in February 2018. The key actors in AHHAT are residents, community institutions such as Pure Grace Missionary Baptist Church, and other institutional partners such as the American Heart Association. The collaborations between residents and organizations have been critical. The Texas Hunger Initiative (THI), for example, allowed AHHAT to use some of the time of an AmeriCorps Vista volunteer to help organize efforts. The group successfully opened the market formally in June 2019, after a year of organizing and testing. It currently runs once a month.

Throughout the planning process finding resources and technical expertise were two major challenges. In order to pursue funding, leaders of AHHAT established a nonprofit called Communities for Better Health (CFBH) to provide leadership, strategic, and fiscal support to the AHHAT. The team has also worked with an existing community nonprofit called NationSync to secure initial small business seed funding for the market from the Houston office of LISC. Members of the group, such as the American Heart Association helped financially by covering some printing and materials costs. Since the opening of the market, CFBH has secured another year of funding through the Episcopal Health Foundation via the Activating Communities grant program. This funding will support the expansion of the market and allow the organization to hire a staff member to build and promote community advocacy for healthy habits and learning.

AHHAT benefitted from having members that knew how to navigate the creation of a nonprofit and connections to key institutional partners to create collaborations. In addition, Urban Harvest, a citywide nonprofit that supports farmers markets and community gardens, provided technical assistance with many elements of setting up the program. This included the sharing of their market rules and vendor applications.

As it ramped up to the first markets, AHHAT did a great deal of research into what community members wanted



Mayor Turner with members of the AHHAT Team

Credit: AHHAT



AHHAT Vendor.

out of the effort. They conducted three pilot markets and collected input via Facebook polls and in-person surveys about price points, preferred products and other preferences for the market. Process improvement and feedback from neighbors and vendors have been critical throughout the AHHAT process. AHHAT also actively recruited vendors and led selection based on their research into community preferences and market goals. The market focused on Acres Homes residents/businesses for vendors in order to make the market double as an incubator space.

As the AHHAT moves into maintaining the success of the market, they want to share information about the challenges and successes they experienced with other communities that might be considering pursuing a market. The AHHAT experience with the process from start to finish could be a huge aid to other emerging efforts.

One challenge that AHHAT members see going forward is ensuring that there is ongoing leadership capacity. Given the centrality of the founding AHHAT members and the growing commitment of time, it's critical that more members or staff can be brought on to help grow and continue the work.

## Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

The AHHAT branched out from the Complete Communities process and helped implement several of the goals that input effort created. By creating greater community connectivity and collaborations the group has already helped foster other productive partnerships that will shore up additional issues. The market also serves dual purposes, not simply providing a service and food, but also presenting the chance for entrepreneurship and economic opportunity.

- Food access
- Inequity
- Economic Inequality
- Disparities in health

## Greater Northside Health Collaborative (GNHC)

### Description

In Near Northside and Houston more generally, there exists a large network of health organizations, service providers, and other health-oriented groups actively working to improve health outcomes in neighborhoods all across the city. With funding support from Episcopal Health Foundation and a BUILD Health Challenge grant, Avenue consolidated these efforts, convening early 50 different organizations to form its Greater Northside Health Collaborative—a group dedicated to utilizing neighborhood-specific health indicators to advocate for new programs, initiatives and investments that work toward improved health opportunities for residents.

### Process

Two years ago, Avenue noticed the need for greater access to health care resources while also recognizing the growing momentum around health care and improved health opportunities among Near Northside residents. Avenue collectivized the ongoing efforts from various health-oriented organizations across the neighborhood and city to establish the Greater Northside Health Collaborative.

With an overarching vision of improved health outcomes for residents in the neighborhood, the Collaborative first devised a set of strategies and focus areas to guide the Collaborative's ongoing work: (1) improve access to care, including increasing enrollment in health insurance; (2) promote an active living, including the development of new infrastructure and initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles, and (3) increase access to healthy food by addressing the neighborhood's food desert.





Credit: Avenue.

Greater Northside Health Collaborative Fair.

This past year, the Health Collaborative brought together six partner organizations and service providers to host a health care enrollment fair at a neighborhood school. By bringing health care access to families at a community school, the program was able to engage directly with residents and sign up nearly 70 families for affordable health care during the event. Building on this success, the Health Collaborative continues to expand this initiative in partnership with other schools and other venues in the neighborhood. Similarly, the Health Collaborative has organized Exercise Days and Health Food Fairs in the neighborhood—all with the goal of improving access to better health outcomes for all residents in Near Northside.

The Health Collaborative is also dedicated to bridging the gap between health and safety in the neighborhood. In coordination with its ongoing efforts to improve safe, affordable housing in the neighborhood, the Health Collaborative also supports Avenue's ongoing lead abatement initiative—a problem at the crossroads of housing, health and safety.

### **Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed**

With Avenue spearheading the efforts of the Collaborative, the Health Collaborative builds the capacity of its residents through collective action, coordinated programming and information sharing. By meeting residents where they are, the Collaborative is more effective in its approach to improving health outcomes for the entire community through collective action. In so doing, the work of the Health Collaborative goes a long way in helping residents access the health care they need to live full, thriving, and resilient lives.

- Disparities in health
- Inequity
- Economic Inequality



Credit: Avenue.

Greater Northside Health Collaborative Fair.

## **Third Ward Health Collaborative**

### **Description**

The Third Ward Health Collaborative is a project-based collective of health professionals, health institutions active in the neighborhood, community members, and other individuals interested in improving the health outcomes of residents living in the Third Ward. Born out of the Third Ward Health Summit initially convened by a collaboration between the Northern Third Ward Families, Children and Seniors Committee and the Complete Community's Third Ward Health Workgroup, the Health Collaborative is intended to provide a dynamic and engaging space where talents, knowledge and interests converge and result in innovative projects to improve the health of residents living in the neighborhood. The Collaborative responds directly to health data and findings highlighted in the Northern Third Ward Neighborhood Plan, the Complete Communities Action Plan, and the Baker Institute-Sankofa Research Institute Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

### **Process**

Driven by the health data findings and the momentum generated by the planning meetings that led to the Third Ward Health Summit, the Health Collaborative represents an opportunity for stakeholders to take real action in addressing the ongoing health challenges of the community. To guide the strategic direction of the Collaborative, the Summit gathered data from attendees to compile an inventory of Third Ward health services and programs, gathered a list of upcoming health-related events for the year from participants, informed participants of the health needs of the neighborhood, and brainstormed potential models and ideas to be implemented in the



community. The Third Ward Health Collaborative meets monthly to continue this discussion and provide updates to the community as it makes progress towards improving health outcomes in the Third Ward.

Today, the Third Ward Health Collaborative has a defined leadership structure that ensures its ability to implement projects and guarantee community buy-in. Specifically, the Collaborative is led by an Advisory Team which consists of selected neighborhood anchor organizations (Complete Communities, Northern Third Ward, University of Houston and Texas Southern University) and motivated community members willing to serve in an advisory capacity to provide guidance to Project Teams.

The Collaborative Project Teams are dedicated to managing the execution of Collaborative-endorsed neighborhood-level projects. Each Project Team is led by two Project Leads and one Key Person to help coordinate their efforts. Generally, building on the existing health services and infrastructure present in the neighborhood, the Collaborative tends to prioritize community-level projects

in support of improved maternal health, food systems, health service providers, mental health, green space/physical activity, school-based health, transportation and senior citizen health.

### **Ties to Resilience**

Similar to Avenue's Health Collaborative, the Third Ward Health Collaborative recognizes the value in combining the efforts of all the active organizations and health service providers in the neighborhood while targeting residents in the neighborhood that are most in need of improved healthcare options and healthy alternatives. Both Health Collaboratives serve as models by which other neighborhoods could collaborate across organizations towards similar goals and collectivize action to be more effective in ensuring the preferred outcomes--in this case, bolstering community health and longevity.

- Disparities in health
- Inequity
- Economic Inequality

## **Challenge 5: Resilient Houston Tie-ins**

- **Chapter 2: Safe and Equitable Neighborhoods**
  - **Goal 6:** We will ensure that all neighborhoods are healthy, safe, and climate-ready
    - **Action 19:** Grow equitable access to quality food to nourish Houston's status as a culinary capital

## **Challenge 5: Complete Communities Tie-ins**

- **Health:** Expand Access to Healthy Food and Improve Access to Health Services
  - **Acres Homes:** *Attract and Weekly Saturday Farmers Market*
  - **Gulfton:** *Provide Preventive Healthcare, Including Multilingual Health Fairs at Area Schools and Apartment Complexes*
  - **Near Northside:** *Increase Food Security by Expanding Area Farmers Markets, Healthy Corner Stores, and Brighter Bites*
  - **Second Ward:** *Expand Community Gardens and Urban Farms*
  - **Third Ward:** *Expand and Improve Access to Care Through Health Outreach Programs*

# Challenge 6: Local Economic Development and Job Training

All five of the initial Complete Communities have notably higher unemployment rates and lower median household incomes than the Houston-wide average. For these communities, access to stable, reliable job opportunities that provide decent, living wages was highlighted by residents as a major challenge to the economic well-being of the community, especially for teenagers and young adults who lack easy access to job training.

Access to employment is critical to both individual and community-wide quality of life and long-term stability. Without reliable employment and job training opportunities within the neighborhood, residents are more likely to struggle to make ends meet over the short-term. This can be a detriment to wealth and stability over the long-term. These difficulties include paying rent and other housing costs, affording healthy groceries for themselves and their families, and setting aside savings for future or current education. Over time, depressed employment opportunities can diminish the chance for residents to live healthy, thriving lives within their neighborhood of choice.

Only through local opportunities in employment, workforce development and job training, and support for local business will a strengthened, healthy local economy adequately meet the needs of residents in all communities. Economic development and job growth are critical for the long-term stability of each community in the Houston region. Targeted focus to build the economic capacity of individual residents and neighborhoods is essential in building resilient communities and a more resilient city.

*Fortunately, there are a number of homegrown initiatives working towards this very goal of sustained economic development, improved job opportunities, and stable, profitable local businesses. The following organizations, programs, and initiatives are building on the existing economic strengths of their host neighborhoods while providing stable job opportunities*

*for all residents and building the capacity of local businesses, residents and the surrounding community at large.*

## Urban Partnerships Community Development Corporation (UP CDC) & TX/RX Labs—East End MakerHub

### Description

Urban Partnerships Community Development Corporation (UP CDC) is a nonprofit real estate developer. While CDCs traditionally operate in Houston as avenues for nonprofits to build affordable housing, UP CDC, in contrast, is focused on real estate initiatives that spur job growth, create economic opportunities within distressed neighborhoods, and help residents actualize projects that upscale community wealth. UP CDC is the economic development arm of the East End Management District.

UP CDC's partner for the forthcoming East End MakerHub is TX/RX Labs, a maker-space that has long called the East End home. TX/RX Labs is a nimble, innovative maker-space that offers small manufacturers, makers and upstarts alike affordable access to job training that facilitates upskilling and helps unlock new job opportunities for local residents. In addition, TX/RX Labs offers access to tools and flexible industrial spaces for early-stage businesses and local manufacturers to hone their craft and scale their business.

Together, the UP CDC-TX/RX Labs partnership is responsible for bringing a larger, more flexible maker-space to the East End that builds on what has been successful in the past and that more seamlessly blends economic development, community development and job training. Their work builds on the strengths of local residents in the Second Ward. More so, the new space represents a unique opportunity to reactivate vacant space in a neighborhood with higher-than-average vacancy rates while building a new hub to spark further development and new job opportunities for nearby residents.

### Process

In 2016, with gentrification on the rise in the East End, the lease on the space that TX/RX Labs has called home since 2008 was on the verge of ending. Rather than renew the lease, the landlord decided to go a different direction in redeveloping the space, leaving TX/RX Labs without a permanent home.

With years of experience in partnering with community institutions and firm roots in the East End neighborhood, the East End Management District was the logical go-to for TX/RX Labs in their situation. Recognizing the economic value that TX/RX Labs brings to the neighborhood, a partnership was forged alongside UP CDC.

Over the last three years, UP CDC and TX/RX Labs have further developed their close partnership working towards the upcoming East End MakerHub. UP CDC, for its part, has taken the lead on growing the capital stack for construction, overseeing the construction process, and helping design the build-out. Specifically, UP CDC lead has been instrumental in securing the financing to jumpstart the project--a portfolio which includes pre-development loans from LISC, funds from the Federal Economic Development Association (EDA), Section 108 loans, CDBG funds from HUD, and New Market Tax Credits.

TX/RX Labs, on its end, will serve as the anchor tenant once the 300,000-square-foot East End MakerHub is complete. Specifically, TX/RX Labs is tasked with programming for the new facility. This will include a careful mix of job training programs, educational opportunities for local students and adults interested in manufacturing, and the operation of a small business incubation space intended to grow local talent in the East End.

Once construction is complete and the facility is fully operational in 2020, the UP CDC-TX/RX Labs partnership will continue. TX/RX Labs will continue to operate its maker-space in a much larger facility. TX/RX Labs will also continue its job-training and school programs

while running an incubator with 20-25 small businesses sponsored by the Federal Economic Development Association annually.

Beyond TX/RX, additional space will house the operations for small local manufacturers (including jewelry makers, a coffee roastery, etc.) and space for corporate offices. The space is intended to be flexible in order to grow with the neighborhood as new opportunities arise and clustering of small, local businesses and manufacturing operations grow in the immediate neighborhood.

### Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

The forthcoming East End MakerHub is set to transform the Second Ward while bolstering the economic potential of local businesses in and around downtown. It is also emblematic of a new model for localized economic development and job creation that has the potential to be streamlined and implemented in other neighborhoods across the city.

By providing space for small businesses to scale operations, local workers to gain new skills, firms to interact and network with one another, and residents to foster new startups within the incubator, the East End MakerHub is building capacity through dedicated investment in economic opportunity. It is also fostering the creation of a physical hub to which local businesses across the neighborhood can turn for technical support, financial advice, and skilled workers.

- Economic inequality
- Inequity
- Education access
- Lack of economic diversity

## Emancipation Economic Development Council Main Street and Small Business Development

### Description

One of the Emancipation Economic Development Council's (EEDC) main focuses since becoming a formal nonprofit has been on economic development along the Emancipation Avenue corridor. This goal meshes with the EEDC's efforts to preserve the cultural and architectural history of the community, a major plank of which is centered on placing local businesses inside existing historic buildings. The economic development efforts are also aligned with EEDC's goal of keeping long-term residents in the Third Ward community even as it changes with redevelopment and gentrification. All of this work is tied into the EEDC's involvement in the Texas Main Street Program.



## Process

The EEDC pursued the designation of the Emancipation Avenue Main Street corridor through the Texas Main Street program of the Texas Historical Commission (THC). Through the program, THC brings technical expertise and support as communities across the state work to revitalize historic corridors. The Emancipation Avenue Corridor is unique among other Main Street efforts in Texas in that it is one of the first inside a major city—most other Main Streets are in rural or smaller communities—and in that the effort places the preservation of the African American history and present of the community as a main goal.

For the Third Ward and EEDC, this work has meant finding ways to preserve existing facades and historic businesses on Emancipation Avenue while supporting the growth of new businesses to fill those spaces. The preservation of the existing buildings allows growth to happen without waiting on new developments, but it also builds on the historic roots of the corridor. Existing efforts such as those led by Project Row Houses at the historic El Dorado Ballroom building, provide a template for other preservation and revitalization work.

The Main Street work also dovetails with the Third Ward's position as one of several pilot areas for the City of Houston's Walkable Places initiative. This initiative will allow the pilot areas to set street design standards that will enable growth, improve the pedestrian realm and protect neighborhood character. In the Third Ward, the hope is to create a built environment that can support local businesses and reinvigorate the corridor for all users. Housing and development efforts in the community are aiming to coordinate with both the Main Street and Walkable Places standards to ensure that residents can access and benefit from improvements made in the corridor.

The EEDC also runs a small business training program through a partnership with the Neighborhood Development Council, a national nonprofit that shares training and development curriculums. This program is intended to provide a pipeline of businesses to fill the new or preserved spaces on the corridor. The EEDC is providing loans, technical assistance, and business training to participants in the program. The program has already graduated more than 20 participants and is moving onto its third cohort. The EEDC plans to continue to support those fledgling entrepreneurs through the promotion of the corridor itself as well as through the use of pop-up shops/events that help them establish themselves as businesses.

## Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed

The Emancipation corridor revitalization work uses the physical space of the corridor and its existing built environment as the site upon which to build resilience for community members by broadening economic opportunity. By supporting the entrepreneurship of local residents and working to make sure that the dollars spent along Emancipation are going to neighborhood residents, the EEDC effort is strengthening both the spine of the neighborhood and the lives of its residents.

- Economic inequality
- Inequity
- Education access

## Home Builders Institute (HBI) Acres Homes Program

### Description

Lack of adequate professional training is often a barrier to career opportunities. The Acres Homes Complete Communities Action plan identified jobs and career training for youths as one of the community's most pressing needs. After Hurricane Harvey, it became clear that home construction faced both a labor shortage and a deep demand for repair and rebuilding. These overlapping pressures signaled an opportunity to create a training program that would help unemployed or underemployed youth gain skills in construction that could open doors to stable careers in the future. The City of Houston partnered with the Home Builders Institute (HBI) and resident leaders in the Acres Homes neighborhood to open a construction training program in Acres Homes. The HBI Acres Homes program was one of the first community-based implementations of a Complete Community Action Plan process.

### Process

After the hurricanes of the fall of 2017, Norbord, a construction materials company, donated \$1 million dollars to the Home Builders Institute (HBI) to be distributed between Florida and Houston to help recovery via construction training. For the Houston grant, HBI partnered with the City of Houston's Office of Business Opportunity (OBO) in order to design a construction program that would serve a Complete Communities Action Plan goal. Crucial to this partnership was the input of Acres Homes Economic Development Action Team members who could provide both programming and community insights. The Action Team and OBO worked together to enrich the traditional HBI curriculum with other professional development opportunities. They partnered with local



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construction firm JG Hollins Builders, Bank on Houston and the Watkins Group Realty real estate brokerage to provide this additional training.

The HBI Acres Homes program consists of 12-week class cohorts. The program is free for the students and includes introductory construction skills, exposure to the industry and its opportunities, mentorship, financial literacy and professional skills development. The underlying aim is to support alternative and vocational training and career paths, recognizing that different people have different skill sets that can serve them to pursue economic opportunities. Six cohorts have completed the HBI training and the HBI is interested in expanding the program to other parts of Houston.

Recently, OBO has implemented a strong entrepreneurship component to this program, recognizing that the students can leverage their construction skills to create their own businesses. Leveraging partners such as JG Hollins Builders, Bank On, SCORE and the OBO Solutions Center and Certification Divisions, students are now exposed to business design and implementation, market-

ing, MWBE certification with the City, and the professional skills needed to operate and develop a business. Graduates like Ms. Dahleah Moore, who initially enrolled in the program in order to learn how to repair the damages caused by Hurricane Harvey on the home she shares with her mother, are now business owners competing for construction bids around the community, and employing their fellow classmates.

A major challenge of this program is the wraparound services that are needed to fully address students' difficulties, including mental health, lack of access to food and transportation, unstable domestic/home arrangements, and more. Partners to the program such as the Watkins Group, God's Grace Community Church and Baker Ripley all helped address housing issues. Over time, more work is needed to incorporate a case management staff member to the on-site staff team (program manager and instructor) in order to assess and address some of these challenges.

Additionally, while the training is providing essential experience to students, another major obstacle is connecting that training into more advanced professional develop-

ment opportunities and jobs. The HBI training is an introductory course; completion of the course alone does not qualify students for many positions without additional training. The City of Houston has begun to build connections with community colleges and unions to connect HBI Acres Homes program graduates into pathways to skill advancement and employment.

#### **Ties to resilience—shocks and stresses addressed**

The HBI Acres Homes program offers the opportunity to address a range of challenges for students and the broader Acres Homes community. The effort provides tangible job

skills, but the additional work by collaborators to build up a continuous, supportive system that addresses a range of needs for students is critical to supporting student success. Similarly, HBI offers a chance for students to secure a path to stable jobs that can increase household incomes and make their community as a whole more stable.

- Economic inequality
- Inequity
- Education access
- Slow recovery from Harvey

### **Challenge 6: Resilient Houston Tie-ins**

- Chapter One: Prepared and Thriving Houstonians
  - Goal 2: We will expand access to wealth-building and employment opportunities
    - Action 5: Maximize access to economic opportunity and prosperity for all Houstonians
    - Action 6: Provide opportunities for more Houstonians to start, maintain, and grow small businesses
    - Action 7: Prepare Houston's workforce and all young Houstonians for the jobs of the future
- Chapter Five: Innovative and Integrated Region
  - Goal 14: We will continue to invest in the region's diverse economy
    - Action 46: Incubate, connect, and support new businesses in established and emerging industries
    - Action 47: Partner with anchor institutions to further resilience innovation that strengthens and protects the region

### **Challenge 6: Complete Communities Tie-ins**

- Economy and Jobs: Support Small Businesses and Expand Local Opportunities for Employment
  - Acres Homes: Create an Acres Homes Economic Development Hub—with Job Training, Small Business Resources, Co-Working Spaces, Small Business Incubators, Youth Internships and Apprenticeships and Skill Building Programs
  - Gulfton: Support and Promote Area Businesses, Such as Restaurants and Auto Industries
  - Near Northside: Strengthen and Grow Existing Businesses Through Access to Grants, Loans, and Mentoring
  - Second Ward: Adaptive Re-Use of Existing Building stock and Historic Structures
  - Third Ward: Seed New Community-Owned or Worker-Owned Cooperatives and Businesses



# Conclusion

**R**esilient communities are critical building blocks for a more resilient city and a more resilient region at large. For communities, resilience is fomented through civic action, collaboration and capacity building. Often the actions residents and community organizations take are aimed at addressing underlying stresses, chronic, pressing issues that make creating a stable household difficult for residents. Addressing these issues, empowering residents with the resources, experience, knowledge and tools to tackle them, can pay huge dividends for a community. Not only does it reduce the impact of those stresses, but it also prepares residents to take on new challenges and makes households and communities more able to recover from unexpected shocks. Importantly, though, community activities need to also connect into formal city plans and processes for continuity and sustainability. Community-level resilience is as much about preparedness and adapting to systemic challenges as it is about raising the quality of life, establishing and supporting coalition-building and local initiatives, and unlocking transformational opportunities for all residents to thrive and prosper.

As the city grapples with what resilience means for Houston, it's pertinent to take stock of the current resilience work occurring within the city's diverse communities. As part of the whole, these initiatives build upon and contribute to the city's broader potential and trajectory for resilience. Not only is it important to acknowledge and celebrate the work in other communities, but it's also crucial to facilitate the exchange of ideas through information sharing among communities. Communities only stand to learn from the successes, mistakes and lessons other communities have learned on their paths to resilience.

Both the Complete Communities effort and the *Resilient Houston* strategy provide an avenue to connect residents and to strengthen existing community efforts. The community- and city-led work often dovetail well. Tying neigh-

borhood-specific efforts into formal city initiatives can help scale them up and see best practices shared across the city.

The community-level initiatives, organizations, and collaboratives highlighted in this report are culled from qualitative interviews and group discussions with stakeholders in Houston's first five Complete Communities. However, their experience only scratches the surface of what is already occurring across Greater Houston. The hope is that those contained within this report can serve as examples of what other communities can do to take action in their neighborhoods and to connect that work to larger public efforts. Such collaboration and support can unlock new opportunities for all to thrive and prosper and collectively help build a more resilient future for all in Houston.

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