

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Funded through a generous grant provided by the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, the Northern Third Ward Neighborhood Planning Project identifies critical issues in the Northern Third Ward neighborhood. Through resident and stakeholder participation, the plan formulates strategies and specific action steps that will lead to the successful development and enhancement of the community. The Northern Third Ward Consortium was formed in October 2015 to lead the participatory neighborhood-planning effort. Original consortium members included Change Happens (Social Services), Change Happens Community Development Corporation (CDC), Project Row Houses, Row House CDC, University of Houston, Wheeler Avenue Triangle Ministries, Inc., and William A Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity. Consortium members selected Change Happens CDC to serve as the lead agency. The Consortium formed the framework for the Northern Third Ward Neighborhood Steering Committee, which is composed of Consortium members as well as community residents and stakeholders. Having completed the plan, the Steering Committee will transition to the Implementation Committee with the responsibility to:

- Design, develop, review, and refine a work plan to execute the resident-driven community plan
- Provide support and assure accountability for achieving stated project goals and objectives
- Monitor project performance expectations and associated performance metrics
- Make decisions that guide the planning process through its various phases.

The 10-month planning process allowed Northern Third Ward residents and stakeholders to organize and to develop a plan for strategically addressing the needs that we collectively defined as priorities in the Northern Third Ward, and will help to ensure equitable development practices as we move forward. The plan defines a long-term direction with a measurable action plan for a complete community where everyone—young and old—has the opportunity to grow and thrive. The neighborhood plan was developed with the intention that it:

- Build and strengthen the sense of community in our neighborhood through organizing a variety of activities that highlight our unique cultural heritage, encourage social cohesion, create political/economic effectiveness, and honor social diversity.
- Educates our residents and local institutions about community resources, threats, and opportunities.
- Empowers our community through neighborhood planning, inclusion, and advocacy.

The plan is divided into five sections: Housing; Neighborhood Building, Economic Development and Workforce, Education, and Families Children, and Seniors. Developed with input from residents during a door-to-door survey conducted with over three hundred and sixty residents, focus groups, and in community meetings, the plan outlines and prioritizes the recommendations for each of the five sections, as well as identifies target partners, a time-frame, projected costs, and potential funding for each recommendation. A summary of goals, action items, and priorities for each section is as follows:

1. HOUSING

We will preserve our historic housing and build new housing that reflects the different contexts that characterize our neighborhood. Our focus will be on affordable housing that meets the needs of our existing residents and prevents displacement.

Advocating For Our Families

We will work together to ensure we all have the tools and resources necessary to live and thrive in our neighborhood.

- 1.1 **Empowering our Renters** by creating or supporting renter assistance programs (High)
- 1.2 **Safeguarding our Homeowners** with information on property taxes, exemptions and other resources (Low)
- 1.3 **Housing Advocacy and Policy** which prioritizes and advocates for truly affordable housing (Low)

Preserving and Maintaining Existing Housing

We will work together to preserve our historic housing.

- 1.4 **Saving Our History and Homes** by assisting with home repairs and using vacant property for new housing (High)

New Housing That Meets Our Needs

We will advocate for and attract new housing that meets the needs of all of our residents.

- 1.5 **New Housing** which is strategically developed as mixed-use and affordable units (High)
- 1.6 **Housing Design Guidelines** as a means to strengthen the context of our different neighborhoods (Low)

2. NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING

Our neighbors, leaders, and institutions are connected and mobilized for change, the rich history and culture of our historically black neighborhood is celebrated and preserved, and our community is safe and beautiful.

Mobilizing the Community

We will work together to connect and mobilize our neighbors, leaders, institutions, and others to build our political power, organization and leadership.

- 2.1 **Building Our Collective Capacity** with strong community networks utilizing block captains, social media and a website (High)
- 2.2 **Celebrating Our Community** with regularly scheduled community events, block parties, and clean ups, along with an annual neighborhood summit to discuss our ongoing priorities (High)
- 2.3 **Growing Youth Leaders** by supporting existing programs and working in partnership with community organizations and institutions to create youth leadership opportunities (Medium)

2.4 Raising our Voices by creating an annual policy agenda and advocacy plan for the Northern Third Ward and working with elected officials to forward this agenda (Low)

Eyes on the Neighborhood and Streets

We will work together to ensure we are secure and share a sense of well-being in our neighborhood.

2.5 Lighting Our Way by identifying and prioritizing areas with poor street lighting and partnering with CenterPoint Energy & others to install LED lighting (High)

2.6 Community Policing will be developed through stronger relationships with police, advocating for more police on bikes, and creating a block captain program (Medium)

2.7 Eyes on the Street to identify areas with drug activity or other problems and address these areas through collective activities or other alternative means such as mobile security trailers with cameras (Low)

Enhancing the Beauty and Celebrating the History of Our Neighborhood

We will work together to ensure our neighborhood is well maintained and celebrate our rich and diverse culture.

2.8 Right-of-Way and Drainage Improvements focusing on Sampson, Drew, and Columbia Tap Trail (High)

2.9 Mobility and Connectedness by improving sidewalks, expanding B-Cycle stations in the neighborhood, and creating a neighborhood ride share program (High)

2.10 Cleaning Up in order to address litter and illegal dumping and to promote youth stewardship by installing new “ART” trash receptacles in the community (High)

2.11 Re-purposing Vacant Lots as mini-parks, plazas, or urban gardens to be used as formal and informal gathering spaces (Medium)

2.12 Beautiful Streets - focusing on the northern section of Emancipation Avenue, Holman, Alabama, Elgin, McGowen and Scott Street to improve sidewalks, lighting and beautification (Low)

2.13 Restoring and Re-Using Our Historic Buildings, especially those which are underutilized or vacant, in partnership with local organizations or businesses (Low)

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE

Our existing local businesses will thrive, new businesses will be attracted to the neighborhood, and we will have increased access to local jobs.

Growing and Supporting our Local Businesses

We will work together to support and grow our local businesses.

3.1 Buy Local / Shop Third Ward campaigns to encourage people to shop at locally owned and black owned businesses (High)

3.2 Facade Improvement Program to assist local businesses and provide local jobs, or in partnership with local youth mentorship or volunteer corp programs to improve building facades (High)

3.3 Building the Capacity of Local Businesses by expanding access to small business support for funding and mentorship opportunities (Low)

Building an Inclusive and Cooperative Economy

We will work together to create new business models that grow our amenities, meet our needs, and support local and black entrepreneurship.

3.4 Seed New Community-Owned or Worker-Owned Cooperatives and Businesses, focusing on full service grocery stores, restaurants, basic service stores, banks and financial services (High)

3.5 Activate Vacant Storefronts, Historic Buildings and Lots with Pop-Up Shops to spark entrepreneurship in vacant storefronts, historic buildings, and lots (High)

Expanding Opportunities

We will collaborate with area businesses and institutions to remove barriers to employment and create opportunities.

3.6 Hire Local, encouraging major employers and anchor institutions to employ local residents (High)

3.7 Job Training, including trade programs, to meet the needs of local employers (Low)

4. EDUCATION

Our historic neighborhood schools, our families and our children have the resources and support they need to succeed; our many educational institutions—that serve people of all ages—combine their strengths to ensure early and lifelong success for us all.

Strengthening Our Historic Local Schools and Institutions

Our neighborhood is home to educational pathways of choice, building upon historic and strong institutional community relationships.

4.1 Yates High School advocacy to strengthen the communication and maritime magnet programs (High)

4.2 Parent Teacher Engagement to provide holistic resources and ensure academic success to our students by building relationships between parents and teachers (High)

4.3 Strong Historic and Local Schools; creating a strategy to engage faculty at Yates, Blackshear and other feeder institutions to better understand their needs and where support is needed from the community (Medium)

4.4 Partnerships for Progress; inventory all organizations working in Northern Third Ward schools, ensuring partners are working together and holistically to support neighborhood schools (Low)

Expanding After School and Summer Enrichment

Our children and youth will have access to programs and resources they need to succeed.

- 4.5 **Publicize Out of School Programs** through a directory of programs, ensuring that this information is reaching residents (High)
- 4.6 **Expanding Out of School Enrichment Programs** for youth such as Change Happens' after school and summer enrichment program, the S.H.A.P.E Center's summer civil rights freedom tour, and after school zone programs provided by the Smith Family library (Medium)
- 4.7 **Youth Mentorship** programs developed with local leaders and role models, including churches, universities, and the Hermann Park Rotary program (Medium)

5. FAMILIES, CHILDREN, AND SENIORS

Our seniors, children and families will thrive in a neighborhood that is connected, informed and rich with opportunities and resources.

Strong Families

Support the strength and connectedness of our families and seniors through knowledge and services.

- 5.1 **Connected Generations**; build a stronger community of support through intergenerational gatherings and events (High)
- 5.2 **Directory of Family and Senior Services** to ensure families are connected to neighborhood resources through a directory of services and programs in multiple formats (Medium)

Access to Quality Health Care

Improve and expand our access to healthcare.

- 5.3 **Support Services** to families including financial literacy and credit counseling (High)
- 5.4 **Staying Healthy** by expanding knowledge of and access to preventative healthcare programs in the community (High)

MOVING FORWARD

This plan is designed as a toolkit for moving forward. It expresses the vision of the Northern Third Ward community and the goals we created together to achieve that vision. Given the range of action items and the steps necessary to make our goals a reality, it is important to note that this plan is a living document — one that will evolve as we continue to dialogue, as new partnerships are created, and as new funding sources becomes available. As implementation moves forward, recommendations and priorities in this plan should continuously be reevaluated to adapt to changes in the neighborhood and in the political and economic climate. Of the highest priority is that the principles embodied in this plan are followed through.

Several important next steps must be taken to assure that all participants stay involved and that those in leadership positions take note of the plan and embrace an active role in its implementation. The plan has been submitted to the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, and the next immediate step (with Wells Fargo) is to begin the discussion about potential implementation funding. Other steps to move forward are as follows:

1. Present the plan to government agencies

The plan should be submitted to the local City Council representatives as well as the Houston Planning Commission for review. This should occur immediately after release of the final plan in mid-2017.

2. Raise awareness of the plan to the community

Printed copies of the Executive Summary and electronic copies of the full plan will be distributed to neighborhood organizations, local partners, and foundations, including Smith Neighborhood Library, Third Ward Multi-Service Center, Change Happens, and Project Row Houses. Media outlets, including print, radio, TV, and social media will be engaged to further spread the word.

3. Transition to the Northern Third Ward Planning Project Implementation Committee

The future of this plan will rely on the Steering Committee transitioning to an Implementation Committee which will be responsible for overseeing and coordinating the implementation of the plan. Other specific plan implementation responsibilities will include: publicizing and disseminating the plan; continuing to recruit community stakeholders into the implementation process; budgeting and raising funds; implementing the goals, objectives, and activities specified in the plan; obtaining formal approvals and permits needed for physical improvement projects; assembling resources and support to implement long-term objectives; and reporting back to the community. The Implementation Committee will determine the individuals and organizations that will perform in the various capacities needed to meet these implementation activities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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