

# LSC HOUSTON

## Envision Houston: The State of Houston Communities

January 2024

## Table of Contents

- I. Ecosystem Framing & LISC Impact
- II. Project Background & Methodology
- III. Overall Findings from the Community
- IV. Key Neighborhood Highlights
- V. Summary
- VI. Recommendations Based On What We Heard
- VII. Conclusion & Acknowledgements



## I. Ecosystem Framing & LISC Impact

Our country stands at a pivotal moment, brimming with talented individuals and communities blessed with extraordinary assets. They are poised to contribute to the diverse elements that fuel our country's vitality and maintain our competitiveness on the global stage. Our challenge lies in surmounting obstacles, such as historical disinvestment, lack of access to affordable housing and growing wealth inequality, to catalyze opportunities for all. Given the multifaceted nature of this opportunity gap, no singular solution can bridge it.

As one of the nation's largest community development organizations, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) stands ready to support our community leaders and residents as they undertake community-driven change for their neighborhoods. Dedicated to fostering equitable growth and empowerment in underserved neighborhoods, LISC, a national Community Development Financial Institution, drives investment and capacity building supports spanning housing, businesses, community infrastructure, safety, health, childcare, and more to make the path smoother for communities. Our aim is to uplift individuals, transform places, support innovative enterprises, creating long-term economic and community system changes. Under the banner of Project 10X, LISC has intensified engagement to close racial health, wealth, and opportunity gaps, particularly addressing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color.

Guided by a mission to forge resilient and vibrant communities through strategic investments, collaboration, and community engagement since 1979, LISC's initiatives have resulted in \$26.7 billion in investments for communities across the country, leveraging \$75 billion of existing community development and capital. This includes over 460,000 affordable housing units and 78.5 million square feet of commercial and community space, with more than 280,000 square feet of new and improved childcare space benefiting over 25,000 children annually throughout the country.

Of the above impact, over \$563 million has been invested in Houston communities since 1989, leveraging \$1.5 billion from other stakeholders and funders for projects. This has yielded more than 10,000 affordable housing units and 2 million square feet of commercial and community space. Additionally, almost 10,000 individuals have received training and education for better careers, while nearly 5,000 have been coached toward obtaining improved wages or securing new jobs. Thousands of small businesses have also been supported or grown. LISC Houston's work can be framed through the following key pillars:

- **Housing Development:** In the last five years alone, LISC Houston has supported non-profit community development corporations in creating and preserving over 2,000 affordable housing units across various neighborhoods. This effort has provided stable and secure living spaces for low-income families, underscoring our commitment to addressing housing needs.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Collaborating with local stakeholders, LISC Houston has supported the facilitation of the establishment of 150 small businesses, generating approximately five hundred jobs within underserved communities. These initiatives have not only strengthened local economies but also empowered individuals through entrepreneurship opportunities and economic stability.
- **Community Revitalization:** Our approach to neighborhood revitalization is comprehensive addressing all aspects of a community in partnership of those living and working in the community – safety, education, housing, etc. Our initiatives breathe new life into disinvested neighborhoods, creating vibrant and inviting community spaces. Collaborative efforts have transformed neglected areas into thriving hubs, fostering belonging and pride among residents.
- **Partnerships and Collaborations:** Central to LISC Houston's success are strategic partnerships with local governments, businesses, residents, and community organizations. These collaborations unlock additional resources, enabling larger-scale projects that positively impact entire communities. For example, joint initiatives with the city have revitalized neglected spaces, paving the way for inclusive development.
- **Community Engagement and Input:** LISC Houston's values insist on shared leadership to attract and grow a broad base of community leaders. Our model actively involves residents in decision-making processes, ensuring projects align with the needs and aspirations of the people they serve. This

approach has led to successfully executed projects, such as park renovations tailored to specific community needs.

- **Organizational Sustainability and Resilience:** Beyond immediate impact, we focus on sustainability by investing in long-term programs and capacity-building initiatives, training local organizations ensures sustained support for communities.

Despite the progress over the last 35 years, our work remains incomplete. Houston's recent rapid growth presents opportunities for sustained economic expansion, yet we also grapple with an escalating affordable housing crisis. Despite our significant strides in supporting communities across Houston, we acknowledge that persistent neighborhood poverty stems from four major barriers:

- Discriminatory public policies and private actions continue to foster racial and economic segregation.
- Market forces worsen segregation patterns and disparities in specific areas.
- City and regional policies, practices, and investment structures often overlook or exacerbate place-based inequalities. This disregard results in isolated interventions that inadequately serve underinvested communities.
- There exists a substantial gap between those intimately acquainted with place-based inequalities and those possessing institutional power to alleviate them.

Moreover, we recognize the inevitability of change. Communities evolve, necessitating new approaches in place-based community development. Additional stakeholders engage in this process and shifts in funding and political priorities shape developmental directions. Consequently, it falls upon us to assess our adaptability to these evolving circumstances. This demands a reassessment of our role in ecosystem development, our effectiveness in convening and advising, and our capacity to mobilize and allocate investments to address these new norms.

## II. Project Background & Methodology

In June 2023, LISC Houston initiated a six-month learning journey to enhance our community development efforts and cater more effectively to the dynamic needs of the communities we serve. Our objective was to better understand existing community needs, key community leaders and ongoing initiatives, projects awaiting commencement or requiring support, as well as identify where LISC could provide optimal assistance.

Our process commenced with a comprehensive survey distributed among our closest allies and stakeholders in June. This was followed by virtual focus group discussions in August and broader regional discussions involving multidisciplinary stakeholders at a systems level to assess the state of communities in our neighborhoods in November. The culmination of our learning journey is a full-day conference in January 2024, where we present our findings to the Greater Houston region.

Historically, LISC has been active in thirteen neighborhoods across Greater Houston: Near Northside, Northline, OST/South Union, Fifth Ward, Independence Heights, Gulfton, Third Ward, Acres Homes, Kashmere/Houston/Trinity Gardens, Denver Harbor, Eastex Jensen, Magnolia Park, and Sunnyside. As part of our learning process in 2023, we expanded our focus to include East End, Spring Branch, and Sharpstown. To streamline our approach, we categorized these neighborhoods into four regions, considering the regional makeup defined by the United Way of Greater Houston, precinct lines, super neighborhood jurisdictions, and the City of Houston's Complete Communities' delineation (**refer to Fig. 1**).

Region 1: **Alief, Gulfton**, Sharpstown, Spring Branch

Region 2: **Acres Homes**, Independence Heights, **Near Northside**, Northline, Eastex Jensen

Region 3: Fifth Ward, **Kashmere/Trinity/Houston Gardens**, Channelview/North Shore, Denver Harbor/Port Houston, **Magnolia Park**, East End

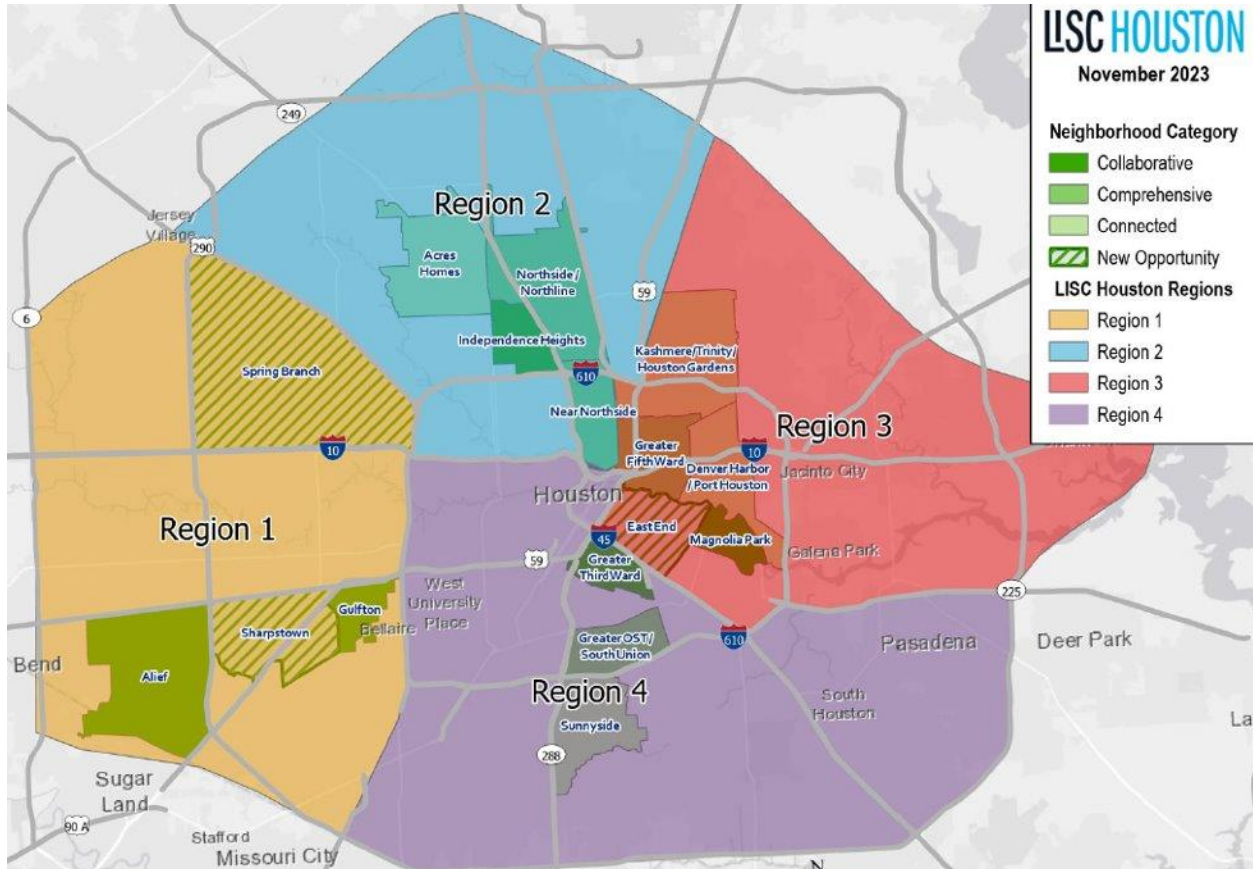
Region 4: **Greater Third Ward**, South Acres, **Sunnyside**, OST/South Union

*(neighborhoods in bold are part of the City of Houston's Complete Communities program)*

**Fig. 1: LISC's Regional Neighborhood Categorization**

Link to interactive map:

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?webmap=e6b2cb5d323249aebb899dfcb163a382>



Our methodology for this learning journey was centered around understanding the greatest impact of and need for LISC's **five core strengths** (refer to Fig. 2) from which we operate to support communities, our **12 areas of focus** (refer to Fig. 3), and the **seven interventions** (refer to Fig. 4) we have found to be the anchors to effecting community development.

**Fig. 2: LISC's Five Core Strengths**



**Fig. 3: LISC's 12 Areas of Focus:**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 1. affordable housing (development, preservation & access), | 5. economic development,                               | 9. safety and justice (crime & authentic/equitable justice), |
| 2. childcare and early learning,                            | 6. education,  | 10. small business development & support,                    |
| 3. creative placemaking,                                    | 7. family financial stability & workforce development, | 11. sports and recreation, and                               |
| 4. disaster resilience,                                     | 8. health (access & affordability),                    | 12. transportation.  |

**Fig. 4: LISC's Identified Interventions for Community Development**



**III. Overall Findings from the Community**

Houston boasts an array of community-based organizations, resident leaders, and government offices collaborating with residents and community leaders to uplift communities. Common concerns across the region include the challenges of gentrification, a shortage of affordable housing, adapting workforce development to post-COVID market changes, and prioritizing transportation and infrastructure.

The city's economy thrives with top-tier employers like ExxonMobil, Shell Oil Company, and Memorial Hermann Health System, collectively contributing to its economic strength. The Texas Medical Center, a global healthcare and research leader, anchors Houston as a healthcare hub, alongside NASA's Johnson Space Center, driving innovation in aerospace.

In addition to these large corporations, Houston fosters a vibrant ecosystem for small businesses. Neighborhoods thrive with locally owned boutiques, eateries, and innovative startups, enriching the city's economic landscape. Industries including energy, healthcare, technology, and manufacturing complement small enterprises, creating a diverse economic fabric that blends corporate strength with entrepreneurial spirit.

Reflecting its rich cultural tapestry, Houston accommodates 145 languages spoken across the city. While celebrating milestones in its history, Houston faces challenges, including increasing issues with housing affordability as well as growing infrastructure issues from traffic to potholes. This juxtaposition of progress and obstacles underscores the city's dynamic yet evolving nature, prompting concerted efforts to address disparities while leveraging economic potential and cultural richness.

The region continues to bring in federal funding to boost our local efforts such as a \$5 million federal grant secured by the Houston Housing Authority, aiming to enhance Housing Choice Voucher accessibility to "opportunity neighborhoods" as well as resources for broadband, transportation, and energy innovation.

Despite promising initiatives like the Houston Port's Project 11 injecting \$50 billion into the local economy, concerns persist about the scarcity of workforce training tailored to job opportunities in surrounding areas as well as issues such as the supply of workforce housing, or lack of support for commercial community land trust.

Of the twelve focus areas highlighted above (see Fig 2.), these are the top priorities that we heard from participants from across the four regions for greater attention and focus moving forward:

Family Financial Stability & Workforce Development	Affordable Housing	Disaster Resilience
Economic Development	Transportation	Small Business Development & Support
	Safety and Justice	

Based on the surveys, focus groups and community meetings, this graph shows that overall, there was desire from each region to focus on stronger coordination, access to investments, and more engagement.



#### IV. Key Neighborhood Highlights

### Region 1: Alief, Gulfton, Sharpstown, Spring Branch

#### Challenges

Gentrification emerged as a critical concern, posing a risk of rapid displacement, erosion of historical culture, and exacerbation of wealth disparities. Population dynamics are marked by racial disparities, a substantial immigrant and refugee influx, and a burgeoning younger demographic. Housing issues encompass soaring costs, escalating evictions, and a shortage of affordable options, intensified by increased demand. Economic woes, including high inflation, unemployment, and underemployment compounded by educational disparities, hinder small business growth and community prosperity. Furthermore, community development faces hurdles like neglected infrastructure, fragmented transportation systems, struggling schools, limited access to essential services like childcare and grocery stores, and inadequate incentives for neighborhood revitalization. Inadequate disaster preparedness further heightens community vulnerabilities. Language barriers, limited incentives for neighborhood rejuvenation, and disparities in workforce opportunities for immigrants and refugees underscore the complex matrix of issues demanding targeted interventions for sustainable development and equitable growth in the region.

#### Projects, efforts, or initiatives underway

In our multidisciplinary stakeholder engagements, a tapestry of initiatives and aspirations emerged, painting a picture of progress. Notably, strides have been made in enhancing transportation options, creating inviting green spaces, and revitalizing neighborhood aesthetics, reflecting a collective commitment to community enrichment.

In Alief, the Alief Super Neighborhood Council and community centers spearhead programs that celebrate the neighborhood's diversity, organizing educational workshops and cultural events to foster unity and understanding. Infrastructure improvements and public space enhancements are overseen by local authorities and community-driven organizations, working together to elevate the quality of life for Alief's residents.

Gulfton's commitment to inclusivity and support for immigrant communities is championed by organizations like the Baker-Ripley Center, offering services, language assistance, and educational programs tailored to diverse populations. Community gardens and cultural festivals, organized by collaborative efforts involving various community groups, serve as platforms for cultural exchange and solidarity among residents from diverse backgrounds.

Sharpstown's revitalization efforts are led by partnerships between local business associations and civic groups, striving to rejuvenate commercial areas and promote entrepreneurship. These endeavors, supported by neighborhood associations and business coalitions, aim to enhance economic growth and community vibrancy. The beautification projects and green space enhancements are championed by collaborative efforts involving residents, business leaders, and local authorities.

In Spring Branch, educational initiatives and neighborhood enhancement projects are the result of collaborative efforts between educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and local government bodies. Youth-focused programs and mentorship initiatives empower the younger generation with resources and guidance. Infrastructure enhancements and community beautification projects are overseen by community development associations, aiming to create a more cohesive and inviting environment for Spring Branch residents.

Embedded within this landscape of achievement is the strength of these communities, characterized by advocacy and a profound dedication to the welfare of residents. However, our shared aspirations signal opportunities for further advancement. Stakeholders underscored the potential for new projects and construction aimed at enhancing these communities—highlighting the need for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems, affordable housing initiatives such as equipping public housing with essential tools and streamlining permitting processes, park redevelopment, and workforce development programs.

### **What would the community most benefit from?**

Through these conversations, a range of needs and requests became known, all pointing toward a shared desire for progress. People are looking for ways to strengthen the local economy, wanting stability and better financial footing. At the same time, there is a clear need for early learning centers and support for adults learning English. Folks are also eager for more funding to boost small businesses and improve transportation within and beyond their neighborhoods.

To address these needs, there is an interest in creating an investment plan focusing on wealth-building initiatives and teaching financial knowledge. The idea is to create jobs that suit the residents, aligning work opportunities with what the community really needs. However, there are significant challenges that stand in the way. Different groups are forced to compete, which makes it tough to move forward together. The goal here is twofold: bring groups together, find common ground, and work toward shared goals; and create models of funding where communities are not pegged against each other for resources.

Transportation stands tall as a bridge, connecting opportunities to aspirations, and a desire to foster seamless accessibility within and beyond the neighborhoods. The key to progress lies in collaboration. The community's story shows a need for agencies and groups to work hand in hand, sharing what they know and pooling resources for a bigger impact. This means getting both public and private sectors on the same page, working together toward a common goal.

Finally, capacity building support for disaster resilience would benefit these communities, so they are able to quickly respond and bounce back from future natural and human-caused disasters.

### **Key Priorities**

Of the twelve focus areas highlighted above (see Fig 2.), these are the top priorities that we heard from participants from this region for greater attention and focus moving forward:

- Family Financial Stability & Workforce Development
- Affordable Housing
- Disaster Resilience
- Safety and Justice
- Economic Development
- Childcare and Early Learning
- Education
- Small Business



Top interventions requested:

- Increased cross-sector collaborations
- More community and resident engagement
- Stronger coordination of services among community organizations

Collectively, these conversations reveal a dynamic landscape of progress and aspiration within our community. While celebrating the milestones achieved, stakeholders passionately advocate for strategic interventions that embrace community-led investment, envisioning a future where infrastructure, housing, and workforce development converge harmoniously to nurture a thriving and inclusive community for all.

**Key subject matter experts, related service providers, or key interest groups which the community identified as relevant to this region in making progress.**

AAPI Community	Houston-Galveston Area	Refugee Service Providers
ACAM	Council	St. Luke's
Baker Ripley	Houston Land Trust	United Against Human
Chinese Community Center	Korean WOORI/JUNTOS	Trafficking
Connect Community	Latinos for Education	YMCA
	Legacy Community Health	

**Current Active Coalitions, Workgroups, and Taskforces**

Alief Super Neighborhood	Gulfton Super Neighborhood	PTO/Community engagement
Alief Votes	Council	meetings
Developers	Health Equity Collaborative	Spring Branch Ministries
District J	Health Equity Collective	SW Coalition
Chambers of Commerce	Houston Housing Collaborative	TIRZ
	Precinct 4	

## Region 2: Acres Homes, Independence Heights, Near Northside, Eastex Jensen

### Challenges

This region faces a myriad of challenges, notably stemming from a confluence of high housing costs and low incomes, creating significant disparities. These challenges span multiple domains, including limited access to healthy foods through grocery stores or community gardens, a significant population of seniors reliant on tax exemptions, a dearth of affordable childcare and quality education options, and a reduced workforce due to pandemic-related disruptions. The prevalence of slumlords, high rents, and a surplus of unoccupied, deteriorating homes all were highlighted as housing related challenges. Gentrification has sparked tensions between longstanding and newer community members, exacerbated by rising housing costs and other disparities. Compounded by the lack of public transportation, residents also face hurdles accessing distant job opportunities.

Moreover, leadership transitions in schools have hindered relationship-building efforts and partnerships, while heightened enforcement of city ordinances as new residents and cultures move into the neighborhood has impacted residents. There is a pressing need for workforce development programs, while fostering stable community-school relationships amidst turnover and distrust. Addressing these issues especially for vulnerable groups like seniors and newly arrived immigrants facing poverty challenges is critical. This convergence of challenges highlights the pressing need for interconnected solutions to uplift the community.

### Projects, efforts, or initiatives underway

Several community-driven initiatives are shaping the landscape and fostering positive change. Acres Homes, with its rich heritage, has seen the cultivation of community gardens fostering sustainable practices while providing options that allow residents to make healthy food choices. Programs like "Acres Homes Champions"

are nurturing the next generation through mentorship, guidance, and educational support, aiming to bolster academic success. Infrastructure improvements, including road repairs and beautification projects, signify a commitment to enhancing the neighborhood's overall quality of life.

Independence Heights, one of Texas' oldest historically African American neighborhoods, is actively preserving its legacy. The neighborhood's Redevelopment Council leads efforts to restore and maintain its historical landmarks, promoting walking tours and historical markers to celebrate its heritage. Moreover, the community actively engages in development decisions, ensuring that new projects align with their vision for affordable housing and communal spaces that benefit residents directly. Efforts are underway to revitalize commercial areas, supporting local businesses and fostering economic growth from within.

Near Northside, renowned for its cultural richness, is witnessing a multifaceted approach to community development. Economic growth is encouraged through business incubators and workshops, stimulating entrepreneurship and local job creation. Preservation efforts aim to safeguard the area's historical architecture while enhancing green spaces, creating parks, and improving recreational facilities for residents to enjoy.

Meanwhile, in Eastex Jensen, a focus on connectivity and education is prevalent. Transportation enhancements, including improved bus routes and pedestrian infrastructure, seek to increase accessibility for residents. Collaborative educational programs and health initiatives aim to bolster youth development and address health disparities within the community.

### **What would the community most benefit from?**

The findings underscore a spectrum of community needs across these neighborhoods, demanding a concerted effort involving nonprofit, private, and public sectors for holistic development. Public housing requires expanded tools and options, urging smart growth strategies that align development with basic needs. Collaboration between city entities and experts is pivotal in facilitating smoother permitting processes and driving federal/state policy support for affordable housing. Targeted interventions are essential in workforce development, addressing skill gaps and job readiness among the youth entering the workforce. Education reforms must incorporate community input and address motivation, trauma, and health disparities while enhancing mental health and maternal care services. Stakeholders, including nonprofits and community leaders, play a pivotal role in advocating for economic development, financial literacy, and local investment models to bolster neighborhood wealth. Achieving collective impact necessitates fostering collaborations and information sharing among agencies, mitigating competition for funding opportunities, and fostering a synergistic partnership between public and private entities for transformative change. Finally, capacity building support for disaster resilience would benefit these communities, so they are able to quickly respond and bounce back from future natural and human-caused disasters.

### **Key Priorities**

Of the twelve focus areas highlighted above (see Fig 2.), these are the top priorities that we heard from participants from this region for greater attention and focus moving forward:

- Economic Development
- Safety and Justice
- Family Financial Stability & Workforce Development
- Education (K-12)
- Health (access & affordability)
- Small Business Development & Support
- Affordable Housing
- Disaster Resilience

Top interventions requested:

- More community and resident engagement
- Stronger coordination of services amongst local community organizations
- Increased cross-sector collaborations
- Access to more investment loans for community development

**Key subject matter experts, related service providers, or key interest groups which the community identified as relevant to this region in making progress.**

Access health	James Dixon	Texas Workforce Board
Art in the Heart HTX	John Branch	The Alliance
Avenue CDC	Legacy	United Way of Greater Houston
Bank of America	LISC	UofH 2021 Design Plan
City of Houston	METRO TOD	UofH Community Design
Coalition for Homeless	New Hope Housing	Volunteers of America
Greater Northside	New Jensen Jubilee Festival	Wesley Community Center
Management District	Precinct 2	YMCA
Independence Height Council	Super Neighborhoods	

**Current Active Coalitions, Workgroups, and Taskforces**

Air Alliance Houston	Complete Communities	Memorial Hermann
Avenue- Greater Northside	Eastex Jensen Super	METRO
Partners Coalition,	Neighborhood #46	North Central Civic Club.
Communities y Salud Greater	Health Equity Collective	Opportunity Youth
Northside	Historical Northside	Pct. 2 Community Center
Be Successful	Houston Housing Collaborative	Safe Walk Home
Bike Houston	Houston in Acres	SN-51 - Complete Community
CEER - Coalition for	Houston Land Bank	United Way THRIVE
Environment, Equity, and	Lindale Park Civic Club	Upskill Houston
Resilience	LINK Houston	

**Region 3: Fifth Ward, Kashmere/Trinity/Houston Gardens, Denver Harbor/Port Houston, Magnolia Park, East End**

**Challenges**

Gentrification emerges as a prominent concern across various neighborhoods, leading to the displacement of homeowners, low access to social services, and inadequate early education programs. Issues surrounding education are pervasive, particularly in areas with low attainment levels and where cultural expectations prioritize early workforce contribution over sustained schooling. The lack of affordable housing and childcare facilities compounds the difficulties faced by residents, with specific areas, such as East End, Denver Harbor, and 5th Ward, experiencing distinct yet interconnected challenges. These encompass stagnant wages, transportation barriers, environmental justice concerns related to air quality, and insufficient access to healthcare resources. Addressing these complex issues requires a comprehensive approach, encompassing policies to combat gentrification, targeted interventions in education, childcare, affordable housing, and healthcare, while also integrating support for migrant communities and bolstering workforce development initiatives to foster sustainable economic growth.

**Projects, efforts, or initiatives underway**

Several projects and initiatives have been underway to address community needs and foster development. Moreover, infrastructural enhancements, such as park renovations and Metro's efforts to expand public transportation accessibility, including bike lanes and urban farming projects, indicate a push toward sustainable development and improved mobility. These communities exhibit resilience and cohesion, evident in efforts to address social justice concerns, reduce displacement, promote disaster resilience, and prioritize environmental justice, reflecting a national focus on equitable parity and community empowerment.

One notable initiative in the Fifth Ward involves the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation (CRC), which has spearheaded numerous projects to enhance infrastructure, promote affordable housing, and support small businesses. Through partnerships with the City of Houston and private investors, the CRC has facilitated

the renovation of historical properties, transforming them into vibrant community spaces. The 5th Ward Chamber has played a pivotal role in supporting small business creation.

In Kashmere/Trinity/Houston Gardens, the efforts led by organizations such as the Kashmere Gardens Super Neighborhood Council and local grassroots movements have focused on improving educational resources, fostering entrepreneurship, and advocating for accessible healthcare services. Collaborative ventures between these community organizations and educational institutions have resulted in mentorship programs and vocational training initiatives, empowering residents with valuable skills and employment opportunities.

Denver Harbor/Port Houston has seen a surge in commercial development projects, attributed to collaborations between the Port Houston Authority, city officials, and private developers. Infrastructure enhancements, including road improvements and the modernization of port facilities, have spurred economic growth, and attracted businesses to the area. Additionally, community-driven initiatives promoting cultural events and local entrepreneurship have further contributed to the area's vibrancy.

Magnolia Park has witnessed a concerted effort by the East End Management District, along with community leaders and local businesses, to prioritize green space development, promote eco-friendly infrastructure, and bolster tourism. Initiatives such as the revitalization of parks, the creation of pedestrian-friendly zones, and the establishment of farmers' markets have not only enhanced the quality of life for residents but have also attracted visitors and investors. Magnolia Park's advancement includes initiatives addressing the social determinants of health and the tackling of food insecurity.

Simultaneously, East End has experienced a surge in new businesses, contributing to the economic vibrancy alongside maintaining a notably low foreclosure rate. Collaborations between the Greater East End Management District, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions have been pivotal in fostering economic growth. Redevelopment projects focusing on mixed-use developments, affordable housing, and cultural preservation have transformed the landscape, creating a more vibrant and inclusive community.

### **What would the community most benefit from?**

The conversations highlight a pressing need for enhanced economic development, particularly in supporting small businesses and fostering workforce retention. Providing capacity building and technical assistance to community-based organizations, like access to grant writers or training for grassroots groups, present promising avenues to bridge funding gaps for vital services. Leveraging the resources and services available through the University of Houston, including student programs, can yield substantial impacts within these areas. The lack of participation in supply chains outside these communities, notably in areas like Kashmere Gardens, underscores a significant economic gap. Addressing basic needs such as food, housing, and safety remains crucial, along with efforts to bridge disparities in creative placemaking and access to recreational programs. Challenges like isolation due to transportation limitations and mental health concerns call for community spaces to convene and foster social networks, exemplified by successful pockets like the East End's esplanade but necessitating replication strategies across neighborhoods. Moreover, there is a demand for cohesive approaches to workforce development and economic growth, especially in areas like Fifth Ward, along with urgent attention to issues related to Union Pacific's impact on health, childcare availability, affordable housing, and the necessity for innovative placemaking solutions to meet community needs. There is a desire to bridge social networks, encouraging collaboration and shared successes across neighborhoods. Finally, capacity building support for disaster resilience would benefit these communities, so they are able to quickly respond and bounce back from future natural and human-caused disasters.

### **Key Priorities**

Of the twelve focus areas highlighted above (see Fig 2.), these are the top priorities that we heard from participants from this region for greater attention and focus moving forward:

- Economic Development
- Affordable Housing
- Family Financial Stability & Workforce Development
- Disaster Resilience
- Health
- Small Business Development & Support
- Childcare and Early Learning
- Education (K-12)

Top interventions requested:

- Stronger coordination of services amongst local community organizations
- Access to more investment loans for community development
- Investments in talent acquisition and retention
- Cross-sector collaborations

**Key subject matter experts, related service providers, or key interest groups which the community identified as relevant to this region in making progress**

AAMA	Houston Community College	St. Episcopal Healthcare
Air Alliance	Houston Land Bank	Tejano Center
Baker Ripley	Houston Parks Board	Texas Medical Center
City of Houston - Office of	ISDs – educational attainment	Institution
Business Opportunity	and job training	The North Action Collective
Community & Family Centers	Legacy Health	The Plant
Community Colleges	Medical & Religious	TXRX Labs
Federally Qualified Health	Institutions	UH Medical School
Centers	New Hope Housing	UofH College of Medicine
Fifth Ward CRC	Port of Houston	UT Public School of Health
Government Organizations	Precinct 2	
Habitat for Humanity	SER Jobs	

**Current Active Coalitions, Workgroups, and Taskforces**

Fifth Ward CRC -GO	East End Bicycle Advisory	Emerge Developers
Neighborhoods	Committee	Friends of El Salvador
Buffalo Bayou Partnership	East End Chamber	Kashmere Gardens Super
Coalition for Environment,	East End Community Coalition	Neighborhood Council #52
Equity, and Resilience (CEER)	East End District	LINK Houston
Community Voices for Public	East End Rail Task Force	Northeast Houston
Education	(safety)	Collaborative
CUT – Center for Urban	East River Project	Northeast Houston
Transportation	EHCEC host LINK every other	Redevelopment Council
East End Alliance	month (Local Integrated	West Street Recover
	Network of Knowledge)	

**Region 4: Greater Third Ward, South Acres, Sunnyside, OST/South Union**

**Challenges**

Gentrification poses a significant challenge, engendering tension between legacy and new residents. High graduation rates contrast with the prevalence of unfavorable and predatory lending in the housing sector. Economic development faces hurdles with the predominance of low-paying, substandard jobs, and the pressing need to reform Housing Choice vouchers to encourage workforce participation. Other multifaceted community concerns encompassed poorly lit areas raising safety apprehensions, transportation deficiencies, food deserts, childcare accessibility issues, and inadequate communication channels. Educational uncertainties and transitional leadership issues within the schooling system contribute to community insecurities, while housing affordability, Housing Choice voucher inefficiencies, and underemployment compound the challenges. Addressing these challenges necessitates a comprehensive approach encompassing improved mentorship, enhanced educational opportunities, expanded workforce development, affordable housing initiatives, streamlined public transportation, accessible childcare facilities, financial literacy programs, technological access, and concerted efforts to combat illegal dumping. The disparity between legacy and newer residents, mindset shifts towards growth and opportunities, and the need for higher education and quality mentorship collectively underscore the depth and complexity of the prevailing issues, requiring comprehensive strategies for sustainable progress.

### **Projects, efforts, or initiatives underway**

Efforts in affordable housing, such as the Cuney Homes project, align with the focus on housing accessibility. Educational enhancements are evident through after-school programs and new early childhood initiatives, bolstering the education sector. Multi-service centers are being established to serve diverse community needs, while outdoor spaces like the Columbia Trail contribute to recreational amenities. Safety and justice initiatives, involving Harris County patrols and private security measures, prioritize community well-being. Transportation conversations with Metro indicate a concerted effort to improve systems. Health-focused endeavors, including the Sunnyside Community Garden and University of Houston's program for pregnant mothers, underscore a commitment to community wellness. Moreover, clean energy initiatives like the solar farm project and utility cost relief programs, such as Aqua Plontics, exhibit a proactive stance towards sustainable living and financial stability. Collaborations with various community partners, including governmental entities like Mayor's Complete Communities and LISC's GO Neighborhoods, underscore a collective push for neighborhood revitalization. Additionally, income-based services and initiatives such as Project Row Houses contribute to fostering an inclusive and thriving community environment.

In the Greater Third Ward, the Emancipation Economic Development Council has been instrumental in launching entrepreneurship programs and facilitating small business incubation. Furthermore, the local partnership have advanced the establishment of workforce development programs catering to the needs of this area, thereby enhancing employment prospects for residents.

In South Acres and Sunnyside, the Houston Housing Authority has taken the lead in initiatives focused on affordable housing developments and neighborhood revitalization projects. These efforts aim to improve housing options, thereby uplifting the quality of life for residents, and attracting potential investors into the area. Additionally, community-driven programs have played a role in fostering economic empowerment at the grassroots level.

OST/South Union has seen strides in infrastructure improvements and commercial development spearheaded by the Economic Development Council. The revitalization efforts encompass infrastructure enhancements like road improvements and public space renovations, creating an environment conducive to business growth and attracting new investments. Moreover, collaborations with local educational institutions resulted in vocational training programs tailored to meet the demands of emerging industries, providing residents with access to specialized skills and employment opportunities.

Overall, these collective efforts led by various entities have laid the groundwork for sustainable economic growth, fostering entrepreneurship, improving housing options, enhancing infrastructure, and providing targeted education and training programs. The synergy between community organizations, government bodies, educational institutions, and private entities has been instrumental in driving the economic development agenda in these Houston neighborhoods.

### **What would the community most benefit from?**

These communities stand to gain from a focus on income-based services tailored to their needs. Strengthening such services would provide crucial support to residents facing challenges with access to favorable lending and high-paying work, aiming to uplift economic prospects within these neighborhoods. Additionally, bridging the gap in access to technology is pivotal for enhancing employability and fostering entrepreneurship, enabling residents to tap into opportunities beyond their immediate surroundings. Furthermore, initiatives geared towards improving justice challenged individual employment ministries would contribute to community reintegration and reduce recidivism rates, thereby bolstering both individual livelihoods and community well-being. In tandem, investing in early childhood literacy programs would lay a strong foundation for education, addressing one of the key barriers by ensuring children have the necessary skills for future success. Moreover, fostering after-school care through churches could provide essential support to working families while nurturing the educational and social development of young residents. By addressing these critical areas such as income-based services, technology access, employment opportunities, and educational support, the communities can pave the way for sustainable growth and enhanced quality of life. Finally, capacity building support for disaster resilience would benefit these communities, so they are able to quickly respond and bounce back from future natural and human-caused disasters.

## Key Priorities

Of the twelve focus areas highlighted above (see Fig 2.), these are the top priorities that we heard from participants from this region for greater attention and focus moving forward:

- Economic Development
- Affordable Housing
- Small Business Development & Support
- Family Financial Stability & Workforce Development
- Transportation
- Health (access & affordability)
- Disaster Resilience
- Safety and Justice

Top interventions requested:

- More community and resident engagement
- Stronger coordination of services amongst local community organizations
- Increased cross-sector collaborations
- Access to more investment loans for community development

**Key subject matter experts, related service providers, or key interest groups which the community identified as relevant to this region in making progress**

Cadence Bank	Houston Public Library
City of Houston - Health	Neighborhood Recovery CDC
City of Houston - Housing & Community Development	Super Neighborhood 67
Emancipation Economic Development Council	Texas Workforce Solutions
HAR - Houston Association of Realtors	ULI - Urban Land Institute
Harris Health	UofH college of medicine
Houston Community Land Trust	YMCA
Houston Land Bank	YWCA

## Current Active Coalitions, Workgroups, and Taskforces

BE Well	Greater Southeast Houston	Step Healthy (Memorial Hermann)
Center for Civic & Public Policy Improvement	Housing Collaborative	Sunnyside Civic Club
Collective Action for Youth	Houston Equity Fund	Sunnyside Community Energy Group
Community Loan Center	ION CBA Taskforce	Sunnyside TIRZ
Complete Communities Developers	Matthew 25 at Wheeler	Super Neighborhoods
District B United (civic engagement)	Neighborhood Recovery CDC - GO	TAPS – collaboration between schools and law enforcement
Dream 77021 Collaborative	Norther Third Ward & Hiram	Third Ward Community Cloth
Faith in Action	Clarke Community Resiliency Project: WORKGROUP	
Friends of Alameda	OHIP - Collaborative	
Friends of McGregor park	Provision Inc	
	St Francis Prison Ministry Collaboration	



## V. Summary

The Houston community stands as a testament to the enduring human spirit, marked by resilience and fortitude. What distinguishes Houston is its remarkable inclination to work together, fostering partnerships that combine varied expertise and resources. Yet, beyond collaboration lies a deeper motivation—an unwavering drive for change. Houstonians exhibit a readiness to enact transformations, driven by a vision that encompasses progress and inclusivity for the betterment of their community.

Houston's existing efforts provide a foundation, but there's room for improvement and adoption of additional strategies to address the challenges posed by gentrification, economic disparities, and community development in various neighborhoods. Tailoring policies to specific neighborhood needs and promoting equitable development could enhance Houston's approach to mitigating the effects of gentrification and fostering inclusive growth.

### Gentrification:

Gentrification, a pivotal concern across Houston's neighborhoods, poses a risk of displacement, cultural erosion, loss of generational wealth, and tension between new neighbors and legacy neighbors. To mitigate these impacts, collaborative funding models, inclusive policies safeguarding affordable housing, and community-driven initiatives like anti-displacement toolkits can foster equitable development. Encouraging diverse housing models, and advocating for rent stabilization or funding measures are pivotal steps toward preserving neighborhood diversity and mitigating the adverse effects of gentrification.



### **Affordable Housing:**

While Houston has resources like the Houston Housing Authority and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program, the city faces challenges in preserving existing affordable units and preventing rapid displacement due to escalating property values in gentrifying areas. There is a need for more proactive measures, to ensure a higher percentage of affordable housing in new developments and preserve affordability in rapidly changing neighborhoods.

### **Workforce Development Programs:**

Initiatives through the Texas Workforce Commission and Houston Community College provide much needed workforce training. Yet, there is still a gap in aligning training programs with local job opportunities in specific neighborhoods. A more targeted approach to workforce development, linking job training programs for industries relevant to specific neighborhoods facing economic challenges, could address skill gaps and unemployment more effectively. More importantly, it's also evident that the definition of workforce development needs to be expanded to include entrepreneurship, especially with the continued rise in the gig economy, social media, and AI.

### **Small Business Support:**

Our small businesses are the epicenter of what makes Houston so unique. Yet, in times of crisis, they are the most vulnerable. Creating more streamlined support, access to microloans, or incentives for small businesses, especially in neighborhoods undergoing rapid changes, would provide an economic foundation for neighborhoods lacking job growth and opportunities. Further easing of regulations, mentorship programs, and financial assistance such as tax incentives or grants tailored to small businesses in vulnerable areas could encourage entrepreneurship and economic growth.

### **Transportation Accessibility:**

Challenges in public transit services continue to persist, especially in areas like Spring Branch and Eastex Jensen, where accessibility is limited. There is a need for increased investment in multimodal public transportation infrastructure, including expanded bus routes and improved connectivity, to ensure better access to jobs and services in underserved neighborhoods. Even more so, the need to connect communities calls on the development of transportation plans tailored to neighborhood needs, address accessibility challenges, and coordinate with local economic development and housing development plans and efforts.

### **Community Development:**

There is a need for more robust mechanisms for community-led investment strategies to fund neighborhood development projects across different regions. Encouraging collaborations between neighborhoods to address shared challenges and fostering shared resources could enhance the impact of community-driven initiatives. Using platforms that encourage sharing of successful initiatives and resources could also be beneficial. Other ideas include:

- Leveraging place-based programs to integrate neighborhood-specific interventions that address disparities in affordable housing, economic development, and infrastructure.
- Emphasizing equity-oriented planning by prioritizing diverse housing options, mixed-use developments, and community engagement to avoid displacement and promote affordability.
- Promoting policies that safeguard cultural heritage and preserve historic neighborhoods, ensuring that revitalization efforts respect and enhance community identity.

## **VI. Recommendations Based On What We Heard**

### **Funders**

**Collaborative Funding Models:** Create funding models that encourage collaboration among community groups rather than fostering competition. Launch a grant consortium where multiple funders pool resources to support issue/problem specific solutions per neighborhood. This will eliminate duplication, enhance coordination, and by pooling funding together into one fund expand and increase the impact.

**Public & Private Coordination:** Establish an initiative whereby a coalition of local foundations/funders and government entities convene quarterly to discuss funding opportunities for community projects and align (or at minimum inform each other) on priorities.

**Conference with Public, Private, and Community Leaders:** Host an annual conference inviting public officials, private investors, and community leaders to brainstorm solutions and allocate resources for neighborhood development projects.

**Capacity Building:** Provide capacity building and technical assistance to community-based organizations, including access to grant writers or training for grassroots groups.

**Wealth-Building Investment Strategies:** Support investment plans focusing on local wealth-building initiatives. Funders can expand support for local investment initiatives like the creation of a microloan program or emergency matched savings program for small businesses, as well as matched savings programs or credit building products for low-income families.

**Investment in Affordable Housing:** Collaborate with the Houston Housing Authority, healthcare, and economic development stakeholders to create hyper local funding initiatives focusing on affordable housing and economic development to combat gentrification pressures.

**Support Community Development Initiatives:** Invest in programs that empower communities through cooperatives, nonprofits, and employee-owned businesses.

**Support for Small Businesses:** Offer funding and resources specifically aimed at supporting small businesses and economic growth. Establish a grant program specifically for small businesses to invest in infrastructure, building reserves for emergencies, or technology upgrades. Support entrepreneurship programs and partner with community development councils.

**Disaster Resiliency Funding:** Allocate resources for disaster resiliency education, including FEMA Community Rating Programs and NOAA's Environmental Literacy Program, to enhance the city's preparedness and response. Follow models like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's grants for environmental literacy programs to bolster Houston's disaster preparedness.

**Fund Intermediaries:** Intermediaries can provide coordination, collaboration and technical assistance for communities and community-based organizations. Supporting these efforts will help to ensure shared challenges and projects are addressed across neighborhoods.

## Government

**Gentrification Mitigation:** Develop multi-lingual gentrification toolkits for residents and anti-displacement kits for businesses, utilizing existing models from universities to empower residents facing rising housing costs.

**Housing Strategies:** Explore diverse housing models like co-living arrangements, sweat equity multi-unit condominiums, and culturally appropriate multi-generational housing to address affordability and inclusivity.

**Policy Interventions:** Implement or expand policies that address issues of gentrification, affordable housing, childcare, and workforce development. Example: implement zoning policies in Denver Harbor/Port Houston to protect existing affordable housing stock from gentrification pressures. Various cities worldwide have implemented strategies to mitigate the effects of gentrification. Here are some examples of approaches used in different cities:

Inclusionary Zoning: Cities such as Washington D.C. and New York have inclusionary zoning policies requiring developers to reserve a certain percentage of units in new developments for affordable housing. This helps maintain socioeconomic diversity in neighborhoods experiencing gentrification.

Rent Control and Rent Stabilization: San Francisco and New York City have rent control or stabilization laws that limit rent increases on certain properties, protecting long-term residents from sharp rent hikes and displacement.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage: Cities like New Orleans and Barcelona have actively preserved their cultural heritage by implementing policies to protect historic buildings and neighborhoods. This helps maintain the identity and character of areas experiencing gentrification.

Equitable Development Plans: Portland and Seattle have adopted comprehensive plans that prioritize equitable development. They focus on investing in existing communities, providing affordable housing, improving public transportation, and supporting local businesses to prevent displacement.

Anti-Displacement Strategies: Berlin and Vancouver have implemented policies to support tenants facing eviction due to gentrification. This includes legal assistance, rent subsidies, and programs that give tenants the right of first refusal to buy properties.

Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs): Los Angeles and Atlanta have used CBAs negotiated between developers and community organizations. These agreements ensure that new developments provide community benefits like affordable housing, job opportunities, and public amenities.

Tax Incentives and Abatements: Some cities, like Philadelphia, have introduced tax incentives for landlords who maintain affordable rental units or invest in low-income neighborhoods, encouraging the preservation of affordable housing.

Equity-Oriented Planning: Minneapolis and Vancouver have adopted planning policies focusing on equity and inclusion. They prioritize diverse housing options, mixed-use developments, and community engagement to avoid displacement and promote affordability.

Renter Protections: Cities like Oakland and Los Angeles have enhanced renter protections, including just-cause eviction laws, to prevent landlords from evicting tenants without sufficient reason.

**Section 8 Policy Reforms**: Reform Section 8 vouchers and advocate for favorable lending practices to address housing disparities and financial stability. Lobby for policy reforms that address Section 8 voucher inefficiencies and promote favorable lending practices to bridge housing disparities.

**Create a Housing Plan**: The region needs a Comprehensive Housing Plan to better understand the array of housing needs of Houstonians as well as highlight a clear transparent plan for how this housing will be developed and coordinated with economic development.

**Incentive Programs**: Create or implement incentives, density bonuses, or voluntary programs to increase the supply of moderate or lower cost housing units, considering homestead preservation districts. Learn from initiatives such as TSAHC's statewide land bank and land trust through the Affordable Communities of Texas program.

**Infrastructure Investment**: Allocate resources to support infrastructure enhancements and transportation improvements aligned with community needs. Allocate government funds to support infrastructure enhancements and transportation improvements aligned with community needs, like ongoing projects.

**Utilizing community centers for meetings**: City council members should consider expanding organizing town hall meetings in local community centers or schools to gather input and discuss development plans.

**Re-imagining Lyons Avenue:** Collaborative efforts between urban planners, architects, and local government to revitalize Lyons Avenue with improved infrastructure and community spaces.

**Starting a management district in Denver Harbor:** Form a management district in Denver Harbor to oversee area improvements, such as beautification, safety, and economic development projects.

**Starting a Technology Center:** Develop a collaboration between corporations and community leaders in Near Northside to develop a community-based technology training center.

**Workforce Development:** Implement targeted workforce development programs addressing skill gaps, job readiness and entrepreneurship among youth. Allocate government grants to create vocational training centers offering skills relevant to local industries. Develop partnerships with educational institutions and employers to promote vocational training programs and educational initiatives aligned with emerging industries in specific neighborhoods.

**Education Reforms:** Engage community input for education reforms focusing on motivation, trauma, and health disparities. Implement a pilot community-driven education program in Spring Branch focused on trauma-informed teaching practices.

**Collaborative Strategies:** Foster collaborations between various agencies for shared successes and replicate successful models across neighborhoods. Example: establish a task force involving community leaders and policymakers to address environmental justice issues in Kashmere/Trinity/Houston Gardens.

**Cross-Sector Collaboration:** Encourage and facilitate increased collaboration among stakeholders, emphasizing investment loans for community development. Advocate for policies supporting increased collaboration among stakeholders, especially emphasizing investment loans for community development and affordable housing projects.



## Corporations

**Employee Ownership:** Encourage the growth of employee-owned businesses, showcasing success stories like Publix to foster community pride, ownership, and dedication while providing stable employment. Emulate the employee-owned supermarket model and its resilience during challenging times.

**Workforce Housing:** Support initiatives such as disaster resiliency education, childcare services, and affordable lunch programs to contribute positively to the local community and workforce. Follow examples like Miami-Dade County Public Schools' teacher workforce housing project to illustrate effective interagency partnerships.

**Targeted Job Creation:** Align job opportunities with the neighborhood's needs to create employment options that suit the community. For example, corporations can partner with local job training centers in Gulfton to offer apprenticeship programs focused on industries relevant to the community.

**Entrepreneurship Support:** Collaborate with local organizations to create small business cooperatives. Provide resources and support for local entrepreneurship and business development. For example, a corporation could sponsor a business incubator in Sharpstown, providing mentorship and resources for aspiring entrepreneurs.

**Community Engagement:** Engage actively with the community, aligning corporate efforts with the identified needs in affordable housing, childcare, and workforce development. For example, a corporation could partner with local artists in Denver Harbor/Port Houston for a public art project to enhance community spaces and promote local talent.

**Support for Placemaking:** Invest in placemaking initiatives that enhance community spaces and promote local culture and heritage. For example, sponsor a community garden initiative in Magnolia Park, providing resources for maintenance and community events.

**Infrastructure Improvement Initiatives:** Participate and invest in infrastructure enhancement projects like those led by the Economic Development Councils to improve commercial and residential areas.

## Community-Based Organizations

**Food Security & Entrepreneurship:** Establish cooperatives, nonprofit supermarkets, and community-led markets to address food deserts, provide entrepreneurship training, and offer fresh produce access while supporting soil testing initiatives. Look at successful examples like Wheatsville Food Coop in Austin or Jubilee Market in Waco, Texas, for guidance.

**Ownership Initiatives:** Advocate for community ownership of commercial spaces to preserve affordability, promote small local businesses, create quality jobs, and contribute to community wealth building. Highlight success stories such as Market Creek Plaza in California, where community investors own a significant portion of the shopping center.

**Coordination:** Coordinate efforts and programs with other local community organizations, local public officials, and businesses. Lean into the Super Neighborhoods to leverage resident engagement.

## Academia

**Research & Development:** Collaborate on tools and resources for gentrification mitigation, housing strategies, disaster resiliency education, and innovative housing models like co-living to address various community needs. Utilize research from universities like the University of Texas at Austin's Anti-Displacement kit to develop tailored solutions for Houston.

**Funding:** Leverage the institutions ability to secure funding for research and community development to partner with local communities to facilitate the research or implement its findings. Coordinate needs, efforts, and research with local plans already developed.

**Community Development Through Partnership:** Engage in partnerships with communities for community-led investment strategies. For example, a university launching a hydroponic farming project in collaboration with local schools to teach sustainable agriculture and provide fresh produce to the community. Collaborate with local organizations and communities to support educational initiatives, workforce training, and community development programs. Collaborate with local schools in Magnolia Park to provide after-school STEM programs led by university students. Conduct studies in Fifth Ward to identify childcare needs and propose sustainable solutions for affordable childcare centers

**Education-focused Programs:** Collaborate with communities for early childhood literacy programs and after-school care initiatives, supporting educational and social development. Collaborate with local schools and communities to establish early childhood literacy programs and after-school care initiatives supporting educational and social development.

**Technology Access:** Invest in technology access programs to enhance employability and entrepreneurship opportunities for residents. Establish technology access programs providing resources and training to enhance digital literacy and employability for residents in underserved areas.

**Workforce Programs:** Develop specialized workforce training aligned with emerging industries, aiming to provide residents with necessary skills for employment. Develop specialized workforce training programs in collaboration with emerging industries and educational institutions, targeting residents' specific employment needs.

## Healthcare

**Housing Development:** Invest in housing development. Work with local emerging developers to develop affordable housing for at-risk patient populations.

**Spearhead Collaborative Housing Solutions for Community Well-being:** Across the nation, healthcare giants like Kaiser Permanente and Boston Medical Center are partnering with housing agencies and nonprofits, investing in supportive housing programs for vulnerable populations recovering from substance use disorders. These initiatives bridge healthcare and housing, recognizing stable homes as a cornerstone for improved health outcomes.

**Healthcare Advocacy Shapes Policy, Revitalizes Communities Through Housing Initiatives:** From the American Hospital Association's policy advocacy for affordable housing to partnerships like the University of Illinois Hospital's community development programs, healthcare institutions advocate, invest, and conduct research to address housing as a vital social determinant of health. These efforts envision healthier communities through equitable access to stable housing and healthcare resources. For example, a local healthcare coalition advocating for policies that mandate paid time off for illness, partnering with businesses to implement these changes.

**Community Health Initiatives:** Support initiatives promoting green spaces, sidewalks as fitness parks, and walking/bike trails to improve public health and combat food insecurity through mapping affordable lunch options. Leverage examples like Lancaster Central Market in Pennsylvania, emphasizing publicly owned markets for community health.

**Childcare & Aftercare:** Collaborate with employers to provide childcare and aftercare services in daycare deserts, contributing to early learning and reducing commute challenges for families. Learn from initiatives in other cities where employers have offered subsidized on-site services.

**Mental Health Services:** Increase support for mental health services and maternal care initiatives. Fund mental health awareness campaigns in schools in collaboration with mental health professionals.

**Community Wellness Initiatives:** Establish partnerships for community gardens and health programs, like the Sunnyside Community Garden and University of Houston's initiatives for pregnant mothers.

**Justice-Focused Programs:** Allocate resources to employment ministries in collaboration with local churches and healthcare organizations to support community reintegration and reduce recidivism rates.

## **Economic Development**

**Blue Economy Development:** Ensure benefits from billion-dollar blue economy projects reach residents through pathways for disadvantaged communities, educational opportunities, and business access. Explore models like Houston's Project 11 or examples from coastal cities like Miami with successful blue economy initiatives. Emulate success stories from regions where the blue economy has created pathways for disadvantaged communities and vocational training.

**Green Workforce:** Establish Houston's niche in the Green Workforce movement. Invest in upskilling programs and quality job creation to align with evolving job markets.

**Creative Placemaking & Mixed Housing Development:** Facilitate economic growth through partnerships supporting local businesses and creative placemaking efforts. Encourage management districts to fund murals and public art installations to beautify neighborhoods and foster community pride. Encourage real estate developers integrating retail spaces into affordable housing projects to stimulate local economic growth.

**Infrastructure Development:** Invest in smart growth strategies and enhance public housing with essential tools and efficient permitting processes. Invest in renovating public parks and adding recreational facilities to improve community spaces. Invest in infrastructure projects that improve access to essential services, transportation, and housing. Invest in renovating public spaces and creating walkable areas to improve community interaction and safety.

**Neighborhood Revitalization:** Spearhead initiatives like those undertaken by the Houston Housing Authority for affordable housing developments and neighborhood revitalization.

**Infrastructure Enhancement:** Lead efforts in infrastructure improvement and commercial development to attract investments in designated districts, akin to the work in OST/South Union.

## **Transportation Authorities:**

**Infrastructure Development:** Explore trail-oriented development, EV infrastructure funding, and innovative transportation options like Elon Musk's Boring Company to improve transportation access and reduce traffic congestion. Learn from cities like Orlando with digital permitting and focus on expanding transit-oriented developments.

## **VII. Conclusion & Acknowledgements**

LISC Houston remains unwavering in its commitment to empower communities, foster resilience, and build a more equitable future for all. Our impact is deeply rooted in our multifaceted approach to community development. By addressing housing needs, fostering economic empowerment, revitalizing neighborhoods, and prioritizing community engagement, our efforts have brought about substantial and enduring changes across Houston. We stand firm to serve as a visionary force driving inclusive and sustainable development and continue to expand our reach and impact. Through innovative solutions, strategic partnerships, and a relentless dedication to equity, we aim to create a future where every Houstonian has access to safe, affordable housing, economic opportunities, and thriving, interconnected neighborhoods.

We would like to thank all our partners, funders, community residents and stakeholders who participated in our six-month learning journey to enhance our community development efforts and cater more effectively to the dynamic needs of the communities we serve. This work cannot be done without you.





# LISC HOUSTON

602 Sawyer Street, Suite 205, Houston, TX 77007  
713-334-5700  
[www.lisc.org/houston](http://www.lisc.org/houston)