In memory of Mr. Rodney L Jones, a passionate neighborhood historian, caring landlord and irreplaceable leader of Sunnyside.

| STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS | STAKEHOLDERS |
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INTRODUCTION
ABOUT THE PLAN

PURPOSE

Sunnyside, a historically African-American community located in Houston, Texas, is known for its rich heritage, pride and neighborly compassion. Because of their resilient and introspective spirit, Sunnyside community leaders have declared a call to action: create a safe neighborhood for Sunnyside’s children to learn in quality schools and improve safety, housing, jobs and infrastructure for ALL residents.

Like other predominantly low-income African-American and Hispanic neighborhoods in Houston, Sunnyside faces a number of challenges as a result of decades of injustice and political neglect. Sunnyside is dealing with inadequate city services, high poverty, alarming crime rates, underperforming schools and deteriorating housing. In order to address these conditions and help the community to reach its goals, residents developed this plan as a blueprint for community change.¹

To make the case for better services and overall treatment, this plan examines the community’s history and current data to better understand some of the contributing factors that lead to the community’s current condition. As partners in this process, the Texas Organizing Project sought to: empower community residents and stakeholders, illuminate the root causes of existent problems, and offer solutions to create positive change in the community.

This plan summarizes Sunnyside’s history, uses data to understand the issues residents care about the most and propose a short-term and long-term action plan for government and residents to provide Sunnyside residents with a better quality of life. Neighborhood residents who participated in the making of this plan urge Mayor Turner and City Council to formally adopt this plan so that the residents’ vision can be fully realized.

¹ Texas Organizing Project and Texas Low Income Housing Information Service provided assistance in the community’s development of this plan.
THE PLANNING PROCESS

Community leaders including long-time residents, pastors, civic club presidents and business owners participated in stakeholder meetings starting at the earliest stages of the process to begin talking about their concerns and mapping out plan content, project timeline and community meetings. Initial stakeholders quickly expanded the monthly meeting schedule to weekly meetings, allowing stakeholders to provide continuous ideas and reaction as the plan was developed. Leaders often expanded involvement to others in the community by sharing the meeting minutes and inviting other leaders and concerned citizens.

Where outsiders often view Sunnyside and other low income communities exclusively in terms of problems, Sunnyside community leaders see their community in a far more nuanced and complex manner. They see community values that many outsiders fail to appreciate. For community leaders, these values are the source of Sunnyside’s potential. This nuanced perspective allowed community participants set out their view of Sunnyside in terms of strengths and weaknesses, as well as their hopes for the community’s future. From these themes of strength and weakness, stakeholders crafted vision and goals statements for three priorities: youth and education; crime and safety; and community development, housing and infrastructure. Stakeholders refined their vision and goals through this planning process.

From vision and goals, the leaders moved to developing strategies. Residents gathered and considered the community’s history, an activity that had been long overdue. Sunnyside’s history is essential to understanding Sunnyside’s unique situation today and potential as a strong community. Next, they developed approaches to resolve community problems, and consulted subject matter experts to ensure that all the strategies recommended by this plan agree with the latest research in housing, education, and crime, and encompass the most effective actions. These materials were incorporated into an initial version of the plan. Community members reviewed the plan and made sure the recommendations were relevant to the community and that regular community feedback had been interpreted accurately.
TOP’S FAIR HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD RIGHTS PLATFORM

The Sunnyside neighborhood planning process was organized by the Texas Organizing Project (TOP). TOP is a citywide organization of African-American and Hispanic residents whose members have sophisticated and long standing concerns about inequities in public services and facilities and the inappropriate use of federal housing and community development funds in the City of Houston.

Over the course of weekly meetings, neighborhood leaders from Sunnyside and other historically minority neighborhoods worked with TOP leaders to develop a clear explanation of how current problems in Sunnyside are rooted in past unjust and discriminatory government actions, and a vision of what is needed to overcome those problems. The remedy for these injustices are expressed by TOP’s four rights:

- The right to choose
- The right to stay
- The right to equal treatment
- The right to have a say

The right to choose is the promise of individual and family mobility, integration and choice of where to live for low-income people of color.

The right to stay prevents the involuntary displacement of low-income people of color through gentrification.

The right to equal treatment demands that public services and facilities, along with certain regulated private services such as access to mortgage credit and housing, are provided equitably in low-income neighborhoods of color, just as they are in privileged white neighborhoods.

The right to have a say is a demand that government permit low-income people of color meaningful democratic participation in the decisions that affect their families and neighborhoods.

The problems facing the Sunnyside community today can be traced back to an historic failure of the city to extend the Sunnyside residents these four rights. At its core, the Sunnyside plan asks the city to correct past discrimination by collaborating with community leaders to understand how the problems facing the community today came about and to accept responsibility for correcting historical injustices through improving housing choice and adopting the initiatives outlined in the plan. By doing so, the city will remediate past harm and ensure that future injustices do not occur by guaranteeing the residents of Sunnyside, and all neighborhoods in Houston, these four rights.
HOW TO USE THE PLAN

This plan is a blueprint for the future of Sunnyside presented to elected officials, administrators, developers, and other decision makers to demand improvements and better services. First, the plan reports Sunnyside’s existing and historical conditions to give the reader demographic context of the neighborhood. Next, main events in Sunnyside’s history and major points of interaction between the community and the city are highlighted.

The centerpiece is the Action Plan, focusing on three issues prioritized by the community: 1) youth and education; 2) crime and safety; and 3) community development, housing, and infrastructure. Data illustrating the existing conditions are provided for each issue, followed by residents’ vision, goals, and strategies.

Many Sunnyside residents participated in the making of this document, but the insights and ideas residents present in this plan are not the final word. A good plan is a living document, revised when new information is uncovered, new perspectives emerge or as new goals are agreed upon by the participants. Sunnyside residents should amend this plan each year to incorporate new information learned and progress gained during implementation.

Vision

Goals

Strategies

Use this broad statement to set the tone for the direction of the campaign.

Use these for direction and guidance throughout the campaign. Performance indicators help measure progress.

Use these tactics as programs and initiatives to reach the goals.

Implementation Process

Organize

- Create subcommittees
- Share plan goals
- Get more residents involved

Prioritize

- Rank and choose strategies
- Delegate action items

Collaborate

- Book meetings with decision makers
- Collect survey information

Act

- Demand improvements
- Use media strategically

Subcommittee meetings
The Sunnyside Super Neighborhood \(^2\) is a collection of 97 recognized subdivisions, 37 of which are residential. The Super Neighborhood borders Interstate Highway 610 to the north, State Highway 288 to the west, Sims Bayou to the south and approximately Martin Luther King Boulevard to the east. The first subdivision, Sunnyside Place, was established in 1915 and slowly grew to 92 homes by 1938.\(^3\)

Today, the Sunnyside Super Neighborhood has a population of approximately 22,000, comprising over 7,500 households.\(^4\) Sunnyside's population has been in decline since the 1970s, mostly due to African-Americans leaving the area. However, recently African-Americans are returning to Sunnyside, along with some new Hispanic and fewer White-non Hispanic residents.

Sunnyside has been historically over 95% African-American, but for the first time in Sunnyside's history, that percentage has declined to 87% as the Hispanic population grows, increasing from 1.5% of the Sunnyside population in 1990 (324 people) to 10% in 2013 (2,189 people).\(^5\) Today, there are almost seven times more Hispanics living in Sunnyside as 25 years ago.

Sunnyside, like many older traditional African-American neighborhoods in Houston, is undergoing a rapid and unprecedented process of bi-racial integration between African-Americans and Hispanics. To greet their new neighbors, long-time residents in other African-American neighborhoods such as Independence Heights are learning Spanish at local community centers, a complement to English classes offered to Hispanic newcomers.\(^6\)

Distressingly, however, neither Sunnyside nor most other historically African-American communities are seeing any significant integration with the white non-Hispanic population (this population has remained around 1-2% of Sunnyside's population for the last 25 years). The limited instances in which white populations have traditionally moved into Houston's African-American neighborhoods have tended to be associated with neighborhood economic change known as gentrification, displacing the long-time minority residents of the neighborhood and transitioning the neighborhood from minority-segregated to white-segregated.

\(^2\) A super neighborhood is a geographically distinct area based on major physical features (bayous, freeways, etc.) that groups communities that share defining characteristics, identities or infrastructure. Super neighborhood councils, elected by the community, have the power to recommend capital improvement projects to their city councilmember.


\(^4\) Census ACS 2009-2013 5-year estimates.

\(^5\) Census 1990-2010 and American Community Survey 2009-2013 five year estimates.

While it may be too early to see or feel the effects of this demographic shift in Sunnyside, the effect may be more pronounced in the future.

The racial dot map shows the distribution of individuals by race and ethnicity in Sunnyside. The inset map shows racial distribution in all of Houston.
The **location map** shows the physical context of the neighborhood in Houston.

The **aerial map** shows existing streets and built-up areas in the neighborhood.

The **existing land use map** shows how land is currently being used in the neighborhood.
The flood zone map shows the extent of flooding during 100- and 500-year flood events. The building footprint (grey) shows potential building damage.

The mobility map shows the major transportation systems that serve Sunnyside.

The community amenity map shows the location of neighborhood facilities.
Hispanic population growth in African-American neighborhoods is accelerated by an increase in Hispanic children under 18, which may bring new demands to struggling HISD schools. Overall, school-aged children account for over 20 percent of Sunnyside's population, similar to Houston overall. Sunnyside has fewer young workers in the 25-44 age range than Houston at large, and a larger cohort of those 65 and older. These factors contribute to the older median age in Sunnyside of 37 years old.

Median household income in Sunnyside rose by $2,765 from 2000 to 2014. However, in that same time, Houston's median household income rose by over $9,000, meaning wages of Sunnyside residents are not keeping in pace with the wages in Houston overall. Seventy nine percent of Sunnyside households are low, very low, or extremely low income by HUD Income limits, while 54 percent of residents are considered extremely low income, making less than $25,000 annually and. Sunnyside ranks among the 8 poorest super neighborhoods in Houston.

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The median household income in Sunnyside is $31,500, which is 70% of the median household income of the city of Houston. Approximately 35% of families live below the poverty level.

Of those households who live in poverty:

- **12%** are married with children under age 18
- **36%** are single mothers with children
- **23%** are women living alone or with roommates (most are age 45 and over)

Source: ACS 2009-2013 five-year estimates Icons by Gerald Wildmoser from the Noun Project
In 2010, Sunnyside had the 5th highest unemployment rate of all Houston super neighborhoods with 18 percent of workers unemployed, mirroring the unemployment rate for African-Americans in Houston. This is the highest rate of any racial or ethnic group, demonstrating that African-Americans are at a disadvantage when it comes to employment and job security in Houston.\(^8\)

Many Sunnyside residents lack access to jobs either due to lack of jobs in the community, lack of major business centers immediately nearby, or lack of access to a vehicle to reach business centers. According to Census On the Map, only 110 employed residents of Sunnyside work in the neighborhood, 2,715 people commute into the neighborhood for work and 9,106 Sunnyside residents commute outside the neighborhood for work.

Sunnyside ranked with many other Houston Neighborhoods as having none of their population living near a business center. In Houston 17 business centers were defined

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as having a high density of jobs. Thirty-one percent of whites live near business centers while only 13 percent of the black population.

Moreover, one quarter of Sunnyside households do not own a vehicle. Only 14 percent of workers use public transportation or another alternative to commute to work. Another seven percent of workers carpool and the rest drive alone. Overall commutes are fairly reasonable (mostly between 15 and 35 minutes), likely due to the large number of workers using cars to get to work.
Residents March in Protest: Sunnyside Fights ‘Instant Slums,'” Houston Post, November 8, 1966. Photo credit: RG D 0006N.11-07-66Fr.18a, Houston Public Library, HMRC.
# Overcoming 100 Years of Harm by Government Policies

100 years of cumulative public policy has led to many of Sunnyside’s current challenges. The city created most of these problems through official policies and must correct them. Simply stopping now embracing these policies will not fix the problems. It will require remediation on the part of the City to undo the harms.

1915 (pg. 18) Sunnyside subdivision platted as racially segregated neighborhood by white developer/city councilman

1917 (pg. 18) Severe racial oppression in Houston sparks riots and decades of Jim Crow practices, pressuring black families to relocate outside city limits

1918 (pg 18) Sunnyside Colored County School (grades 1-5) established

1929 (pg. 15) Houston Planning Department formally adopts residential racial segregation as city policy

1927 (pg. 19) Sunnyside School incorporated into HISD. Students allowed to continue to Yates High School located 3 miles away with no transportation provided

1937 (pg. 23) City opens 300-acre Holmes Road Dump in Sunnyside

1929 (pg. 15) Houston Planning Department formally adopts residential racial segregation as city policy

1930s (pg. 16) HOLC redlines home mortgage lending in Sunnyside

1956 (pg. 21): City annexes Sunnyside, imposes taxes, but does not provide sewer, water, drainage, sidewalks, streetlights or other public services

1957 (pg. 22): Sunnyside double-taxed

1964 (pg. 24): Houston opens Reed Dump in Sunnyside (78 acres)

1967 (pg. 23): Holmes Road incinerator opens

1969 (pg. 24): City expands Reed Dump

1967 (pg. 27) City and HUD begin building massive numbers of government subsidized low-income apartments in Sunnyside, residents protest

2013 (pg. 29) Chapter 42 passed by city council, threatening the character of the community

2013 (pg. 47) Sunnyside named 8th highest crime neighborhood in U.S.

2010 (pg. 64) Sims Bayou flood mitigation puts more Sunnyside residents in flood zone

1929 (pg. 15) Houston Planning Department formally adopts residential racial segregation as city policy

1930s (pg. 16) HOLC redlines home mortgage lending in Sunnyside

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2013 (pg. 47) Sunnyside named 8th highest crime neighborhood in U.S.
For more than thirty years following Emancipation, African-Americans in East Texas and Western Louisiana moved from plantation to plantation seeking economic opportunity and freedom. In the late nineteenth century, the region’s rural lumber camps and sawmills offered a better wage for a decade or so. Ultimately, the promise of jobs, education and social opportunity in Houston became the magnet for African-Americans and a migration of unprecedented scale began. African-Americans moved in massive numbers from rural East Texas and Louisiana to Houston during the first half of the twentieth century.

Houston promoted itself to blacks in the early 1900s through newspapers such as the African-American newspaper *Informer* as a place with “unexcelled industrial opportunities.” This meant largely work in the city’s port and railroad yards, but also in residential domestic and laboring jobs.

The people came as extended families over time, in a pattern that immigrants across the world have long followed and which sociologists refer to today as “chain migration.” An able-bodied breadwinner would move first and send for close-and later extended- family members to join them in the city. The extended families endured huge sacrifices in their migration, often “doubling-up” in a dwelling while family members sought jobs, saved their money and searched for a home of their own. Immigrants brought from their experiences on the plantations and in the lumber camps three things: 1) a strong desire to maintain a unified family, 2) a desire to rise out of poverty and 3) a quest for safety and escape from white oppression. The latter would prove elusive.

The era of the great African-American migration to Houston saw unprecedented acts of racial violence, discrimination and the formal legal establishment of segregation through state and local laws. Reacting negatively to the masses of new African-Americans pouring into the city from the countryside, the Houston City Council passed an ordinance segregating street cars. Laws were enacted that frustrated African-Americans’ right to vote. At the same time, Houston police stepped up oppression and violence directed toward African-Americans. Historians point to the

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**Distribution of African-American and Hispanics in Houston, Texas 1940 - 2010**

1 Dot = 10 people

Source: NHGIS (Census 1940-2000, ACS 2006-2010), H-GAC
cumulative effect as triggering the deaths of twenty people in one of the most violent and significant race riots in the nation’s history, the Houston Riot of 1917. Following the violence, lynchings and Klu Klux Klan activities rapidly escalated. By 1929, the Houston Planning Commission strongly encouraged housing segregation in a 1929 report that stated “because of long-established racial prejudices, it is best for both races that living areas be segregated” even though city efforts to force residential racial segregation had been rare prior to the turn of the century. At the urging of real estate professionals and developers, whites systematically placed racial deed restrictions in their property deeds preventing the sale of their property to African-Americans.

The established residential centers of African-American population in the Fifth, Sixth and Fourth Wards were severely overcrowded as a result of this great migration. Most of these areas were also blighted by incinerators and landfills, incompatible industrial uses, rail yards, polluting factories, severe overcrowding, deplorable slum-like living conditions and the deplorable housing conditions maintained by predatory absentee landlords. Yet, many of these migrants, constrained by Jim Crow segregation and poverty, continued to

Housing opportunities for African-Americans within Houston’s city limits were extremely limited in the early 1900s, partly due to the city’s encouragement of segregation. Early African-American communities soon grew overcrowded and blighted by undesirable land uses such as incinerators and landfills, leaving many families searching for a better quality of life. They found it in Sunnyside and other African-American suburban neighborhoods, such as Acres Homes and Independence Heights.

press into Houston’s established racial ghettos where mostly white slumlords rented decrypt “shotgun houses” for inflated costs. Conditions in these established settlements quickly became even worse though overcrowding and rapidly increasing rents.

Other African-American immigrants, joined by some longer-term residents seeking to escape the deteriorating conditions in Houston’s African-American ghettos, sought to create new African-American communities on the outskirts of Houston.

The Sunnyside community was originally settled during the period from 1910 through 1945, but Sunnyside was not the only African-American subdivision developed outside of the city limits in this period. Acres Homes and Independence Heights are two others. These suburban neighborhoods presented an affordable and attractive alternative to the overcrowded and increasingly higher cost African-American segregated communities within the city limits. They offered residents the opportunity to own a home in a rural, exurban setting. The fact that they were outside the city limits meant they offered their residents a degree of safety, dignity, autonomy and independence not found in Houston’s ghettos. These African-American suburbs gave their residents an ability to escape, at least when they were at home, if not at work in the city, relief from some of the city’s pervasive Jim Crow laws and exposure to city police and Klan oppression.

African-American suburban communities were widespread in the American Southwest. They were created in significant numbers between 1910 and 1940, according to Andrew Wiese in his book, *Places of their Own: African-American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century:*

“African-Americans struggled to create places of their own. In metropolitan areas dominated by whites, they sought to use suburban space to their advantage, to satisfy their needs as well as their aspirations…Thousands of black suburbanites objected to the quality of life in many city neighborhoods, desiring environments reminiscent of the small towns and countryside from which most had come. Low incomes and housing discrimination often thwarted these designs, but where they could, black families shaped their surroundings to suit them…

“If race and racism shaped early black suburbanization, suburban life itself tended to reinforce migrants’ racial identities. Held at arm’s length by white suburbanites, African-Americans relied on their own resources. They established separate institutions, worshiped in separate churches, and socialized in a predominantly black milieu. Politically, they organized to overcome racial inequality as members of race- and place-based communities.”

The pioneering African-American historian Carter G. Woodson described suburban African-American communities like Sunnyside in 1930: “In most of them there are only a few comfortable homes, a small number of stores, a church or two, a school, and a post office. The population is not rich enough to afford taxes to lay out the place properly, pave the streets, and provide proper drainage and sanitation.”

Andrew Wiese cites a 1932 a panel of experts on “Negro Housing” that described, “residential neighborhoods in ‘outlying territories where Negroes are able to buy cheap land and build for themselves homes from whatever materials they can find, often a room or two at a time.” Describing a subdivision near Houston, the committee wrote:

“There is another class of people buying out six or eight miles from town. There is an acreage division out there [probably Acres Homes] which they sell in 1-acre tracts, and a good many people have gone out there . . . . The type of people who buy have their work in town and do not make enough to own and run a car, but they hear the cheap prices quoted and jump at it . . . . It is just land out in the country” without gas, water, or paved streets.”
Homeowner’s Loan Corporation Security Map via U.S. National Archives, circa 1930s. The map was used to inform mortgage providers of where they could find the “best” areas in which to lend. Green areas represented new areas with no sign of unwanted ethnic or racial infiltration. Blue was considered stable for many years to come; yellow was “definitely declining;” and red were “hazardous.” The yellow area farthest south on the map is OST.
The community’s first subdivision, Sunnyside Place, was platted in 1915 by H.H. Holmes, a white former city councilman and real estate developer. The first Sunnyside residents were excited to find an affordable neighborhood south of the city, where property had “always been considered as choice, since most of the restricted additions for white people were located [south of downtown].” The 1,200 lots in Sunnyside were larger than those in the older wards of the city, a welcome relief to the overcrowding found in the inner-city. Yet they were platted to be smaller than the adjacent, more affluent and white Brookhaven subdivision to provide an affordable option to working class families. 

Almost without exception, banks would not make loans to African-Americans to buy land and finance the construction of their homes and businesses. By the early 1930’s, when New Deal programs were established to provide government support for home purchase lending, the federal agency overseeing these loans drew maps with red lines around “undesirable areas” where loans were not made.

These areas in Houston correspond almost exclusively with the city’s African-American neighborhoods. Areas designed as “desirable” for home loans are the neighborhoods where African-Americans were legally excluded from buying property by the ubiquitous racial deed restrictions. While evidence is no longer available, it is likely that the people who bought the lots in Sunnyside Place and the other subdivisions that eventually comprised today’s Sunnyside community had to depend on high interest rate loans in the form of land sales contracts from the white man who sold the lots. The financing for building a home was a second huge problem. Some lumber yards offered African-Americans high interest credit to finance building materials.

Yet despite these barriers and struggles, Sunnyside residents in the early years were almost always owners of their land and homes. The few who did not were often long-term renters struggling to make a living and did not have basic utility amenities.

By 1938, there were two grocery stores, one auto repair shop and two churches serving 92 homes. Most residents worked in “common labor,” while others were cooks, maids,

11 Coincidentally, the platting of the first subdivision in Sunnyside aligns with a heightened period of black anger over Jim Crow and the Camp Logan Riots. In 1917, the Army ordered a group of African-American soldiers from New Mexico to guard the construction of the new military installation, Camp Logan, in Houston. Since Jim Crow laws had not been enforced in New Mexico, the soldiers were angered by the unequal treatment they received. Word of police brutality against Corporal Baltimore, 150 men marched on Houston, firing at White civilians and targeting police officers. Seventeen people were killed in the riot.


In 1918, H.H. Holmes donated nine lots to Harris County for a community school. However, residents had to continue to press the county to finally build a one-room school called Sunnyside Colored School, which offered first through fifth grade. Twelve students were in attendance the first year, and by 1938, 52 students were in attendance. The school became part of the Houston Independent School District in 1927. Jack Yates High School opened to Sunnyside students at that time, but transportation was not provided to the school until 1935. Prior to the bus, Sunnyside students traveled three miles to Yates on horseback, wagons, or by foot, “so determined were they to complete their high school work.”

The original Sunnyside community was an active and organized one. In 1922, community leaders persuaded H.H. Holmes to provide a lot for the community’s first church: Mount Vernon Baptist Church. The Pentecostal Missionary Baptist Church followed. From there, these churches began providing needed social services in Sunnyside, eventually creating and staffing a small home for the elderly.

Sunnyside has been a close-knit community with high levels of social capital. Residents developed many avenues to get involved and organize for community change. Among the first organizations was the Sunnyside Civic Club, organized in 1936 to:

“keep, maintain, and improve property values within the Sunnyside community; support and promote community activities that are favorable to the

4204 Stassen Street in Sunnyside, 1933. Photo credit: MSS0226-020, Houston Public Library, HMRC.

Patient room in Eliza Johnson Home for Elderly Negroes established by Anna and Clarence Dupree, an African-American couple born into poverty and eventually became investors in education and nonprofit foundations. Sunnyside valued being an independent and self-sufficient community in its early days, values that are carried on today. Photo credit: RGE0047-008, Houston Public Library, HMRC.

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continued growth and prosperity of the Sunnyside Community; and to present a united stand and unified effort in all matters that affect or may affect the Sunnyside Community.\footnote{Sunnyside Civic Club Fall Gala Newsletter, 2014.}

Sunnyside also had two small airports adjacent to the neighborhood. The Linda Sue airport operated in the early 1950s and was located along Holmes Road at the present-day intersection of Interstate 610 and Highway 288. Sky Ranch airport operated from 1946 to 1948 along present-day Highway 288 and Sims Bayou. Sky Ranch was founded by three Tuskegee Airmen who sought to provide black G.I.s and civilians the opportunity to learn about aviation. In 1946, one of the Airmen's wives, Azalea White, was the first black female to receive her pilot's license in Texas. The airport closed prematurely when legislation restricted the use of the G.I. Bill, causing a decline in flight training.\footnote{Freeman Airfields-Skyranch.} Houston's Hobby Airport was subsequently opened not far from Sunnyside.

Sunnyside Civic Club members remember Mr. Pat Thomas and T. C. Pickett led homeowners in a vote to in 1945 to establish a water district for Sunnyside that would enable them to pay for water and sewer improvements by passing bonds. The first bond was issued in 1951 for $975,000 and the second bond was issued in 1956 for $225,000.

T.C. Pickett was also the fire chief of Sunnyside's volunteer fire department in the 1950s. A women's booster auxiliary fundraised for supplies, while the city of Houston provided training and the first fire truck on a lease for $1 per year. Although the fire station is no longer standing, the Sunnyside Civic Club worked hard to maintain ownership of the land. It is unknown how long the club will retain ownership, as the organization finds it harder each year to keep up with the property taxes on the land.\footnote{Sunnyside Civic Club Fall Gala Newsletter, 2014.}

Sunnyside has been home to many firsts for African-Americans. Zeb F. Poindexter was the first African-American to graduate from the University of Texas School of Dentistry in 1956. In 1960, he opened his clinic in Sunnyside in a building designed by John S. Chase, the first African-American student at the University of Texas School of Architecture and the first African-American licensed to practice architecture in Texas.
Sunnyside Plan

The annexation initially came with the promise of improved public infrastructure including paved roads, a safe water supply system, sanitary sewer, drainage, fire and police protection, etc. These services were badly needed in newly annexed areas such as Sunnyside due to the unregulated nature of new development outside of Houston’s city limits that did not require subdivision developers to provide basic infrastructure for sewer, water, stormwater, roads, sidewalks and streetlights. These promised improvements by the city were slow to materialize, when

In Free Enterprise City, Joe Feagin notes that, among other infrastructure-related issues, “…the 400-plus [Municipal Utility Districts] in the Houston area have created major service liabilities for the city. When the MUD areas are annexed, the city sometimes has faced substantial expenditures to provide adequate utilities to replace the developers’ poorly-built or poorly-maintained facilities.”

20 After World War II, cities across the country experienced rapid suburbanization at the expense of the inner city. The City of St. Louis experienced rapid population loss as more residents moved to the suburbs. Most of the population who moved to the suburbs were white, leaving behind a predominately black and poor inner city. St. Louis did not aggressively annex outlying communities in the 1950s, thereby losing much of its tax base as the population declined. Outlying communities incorporated, hemming in St. Louis and preventing the city from conducting future annexations.

21 In Free Enterprise City, Joe Feagin notes that, among other infrastructure-related issues, “...the 400-plus [Municipal Utility Districts] in the Houston area have created major service liabilities for the city. When the MUD areas are annexed, the city sometimes has faced substantial expenditures to provide adequate utilities to replace the developers’ poorly-built or poorly-maintained facilities.”
they were provided at all.

Initially, the delay for providing city services was due to a lawsuit from a group of white property owners elsewhere in the city who objected to being annexed, seeking to void the city’s annexation and forbid the city from paying water district bonds with property taxes. Many subdivisions, like those in Sunnyside, had created water districts and passed bonds to provide water and sewer service prior to being annexed. Upon annexation, Houston was to assume repayment of the bonds passed by these communities as the city’s own debt. At least some of the water district bonds had obligations that exceeded their taxable value, implying that the city would lose money servicing the debt with revenue from the newly annexed communities. The city then had to assume maintenance of acquired sewer and water treatment plants and their associated infrastructure. This process was put on hold while the annexation was challenged in court.

The lawsuit lasted over a year. In that time, residents were double-taxied. That is, Sunnyside residents paid city taxes while also paying water district taxes while their water services were waiting to be bought by the city. Sunnyside residents organized to protest extended delays in the improvement of the water system and the double taxation resulting from paying a private water supply corporation at the same time they were forced to pay city taxes.

In addition, water district rates were typically twice the rate of the same services in the city. These higher rates left residents feeling that they were not getting the full benefits of being annexed by the city. It took over a decade for every water district to be bought by the City, meaning some areas were paying higher rates than others elsewhere in the city limits for up to a decade after annexation.

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22 “Suit attacks annexation.” 1956, Houston Chronicle. Sixteen landowners in the Almeda-Genoa and Mykawa Rd. area filed the lawsuit arguing the City of Houston violated its own charter in the annexation process. In 1960, the Almeda-Genoa/Mykawa area was 99.5% white. The west side of Mykawa Road was 47% black (U.S. Census 1960).


24 “Annexed areas to pay city, district taxes.” 1957, Houston Chronicle.
While the city was slow to bring the promised improvements, annexation brought other things from the city that harmed Sunnyside. Shortly following annexation, two city garbage dumps were placed or expanded in Sunnyside. Placing garbage facilities in minority neighborhoods was common practice for the city of Houston from the late twenties to the mid-seventies. All five large incinerators in the city's history were placed in African-American neighborhoods (four in African-American neighborhoods and one in a Hispanic neighborhood).25 All five municipal landfills from 1920 to 1970 were located in African-American neighborhoods. Minority neighborhoods with former landfill sites often experience more illegal dumping from small private haulers and others who want to avoid garbage fees at designated disposal facilities.

The 300-acre Holmes Road landfill began operation in the 1937 just south of the first subdivision in Sunnyside. A long-time resident recalls the first roads paved in Sunnyside by the city upon annexation were those leading to the Holmes Road city dump just south of the first subdivision in Sunnyside.26 An incinerator was added to the dump in 1967 with an expectation to burn up to 800 tons of garbage per day.27

The landfill and incinerator had a profoundly adverse impact on the community. An 11 year old boy drowned in an unfenced, water-filled hole at the dump, sparking protests by Sunnyside residents who wanted the dump and incinerator shut down.28 Residents also noted the neighborhood suffered from “flies, roaches, rats, and smells” due to the site. Sunnyside’s long-time residents recall the stigma attached to going to school while being from the neighborhood with the dump, as Holmes Road landfill was the only landfill inside the city limits during its operation.29, 30 Pastors in Sunnyside led protests after witnessing other communities successfully shutting down compost sites.

26 Jones, R. Oral history interview conducted Nov. 12, 2015.
29 Jones, R. Oral history interview conducted Nov. 12, 2015.
elsewhere in the city.

In response to protests, Mayor Louie Welch sent a letter to all 5,000 households in Sunnyside promising that once a new incinerator was in operation elsewhere in the city, the Holmes Road incinerator would be closed and only non-combustible material such as bottles and metal would be disposed of at the site. He also promised to build a badly needed playground and park on a portion of the landfill. When nothing was done, the neighborhood continued to remind the mayor of his promise years later.

The City cited issues with the Holmes Road incinerator rarely performing at capacity to justify opening another landfill in Sunnyside: the Reed Road landfill. However, a long-term resident remembers Holmes Road landfill being often at maximum capacity, so there was no other choice but to open a second landfill. The city’s justification for placing the second landfill less than a mile from the first is still unknown.

The 78-acre Reed Road landfill was opened in 1964 as a temporary landfill. Thomas C. Reed, the original landowner, was given an option to repurchase the land in five years at the original price. In 1969, the dump was expanded by 38 acres and the rights to repurchase were bought by the City, thereby solidifying its permanence. After years of protests and arguments with city councilmen, the Holmes Road incinerator closed in 1971. The landfill closed to municipal waste in 1970, but continued to accept soil and demolition debris through 1977.

The Reed Road landfill closed in 1970, but left mounds of controversy behind. The former landowners of the Reed Road landfill, the Reeds, argued that the City left the landfill in inadequate condition, with mountains of improperly covered trash. The land was supposed to be graded and capped for future use. Moreover, smoldering underground fires lasted for months at the Reed Road landfill after its closing due to 20 feet of trash covering two gas wells on the site.

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31 “Park creation OK’d by council.” April 17, 1968. *Houston Chronicle.*

32 “Reed Rd. dump is expanded at $194,408 cost.” Nov. 26, 1969. *Houston Chronicle.*

33 *Belfort Site (Former Sunnyside Landfill).* Brownfields Conference 2015.

Sunnyside’s many civic clubs grew out of need to secure basic city services and facilities. Low income, minority residents needed a collective voice to press for conditions to improve.

Civic clubs take the place of homeowners associations in communities like Sunnyside. However, while homeowners associations have powers to ensure that all residents conform to certain standards and the means to enforce those standards, civic clubs lack any ability to enforce property standards or to prevent undesirable land uses that are incompatible with residential land uses. This is a particular problem in Houston where there is no zoning to control land use.

Sunnyside civic clubs have always been recognized as stakeholders and voices of their community by the City of Houston. Civic clubs recognize that a community has more leverage on municipal issues as a group than one person. However, even organizing at a neighborhood level can leave neighborhoods like Sunnyside at a disadvantage at a city scale. Civic clubs in more affluent communities have access to greater resources and professional skills, with members often lending their services in architecture, law and engineering. Their white collar jobs often provide them with greater skills and abilities.
to argue their case to city council.\(^{35}\)

While lacking enforcement powers, civic clubs have always felt a responsibility to speak on behalf of residents for community improvements. Civic clubs organize and empower people to tackle tough issues such as city service allocation, crime, and drug use. Civic clubs work as a “political liaison” between the community and the local government, often working with mayors and councilmembers to get vacant lots cut, trash picked up, and streets patched or paved.\(^{36}\)

They keep residents abreast of political goings on by arranging meetings between elected officials and residents. While it is recognized that civic clubs serve as the collective voice for the concerns of Sunnyside residents, civic clubs also remain frustrated that their voices and civic involvement have limited power and do not pressure policymakers to prioritize community issues. If civic clubs are seen as the only way to organize collectively in neighborhoods, then some may be left out, since some Sunnyside subdivisions are not represented by a civic club.

**Civic Club Accomplishments**

\(^{35}\) Much of this section comes from an oral history interview of Jones, R. conducted Nov. 12, 2015. Jones is a former Sunnyside Civic Club president.


Civic clubs and other neighborhood organizations often find themselves in a place of power when it comes to new development and capital improvements. The Sunnyside Super Neighborhood, a city-created coalition of civic clubs, provides the city with an Action Plan of capital improvement project requests every two years that is then considered by the city for inclusion in the Capital Improvement Plan. However, this process has its limitations. Super neighborhoods can only make a limited number of requests and cannot request extensive projects.

The Southeast Coalition of Civic Clubs often holds public meetings for developers who need community approval of a new project. Civic clubs are proud of their hand in denying a permit for a new concrete crushing facility near Sunnyside Park. They leveraged partnerships with U.S. Rep. Al Green and the Texas Southern University legal department to prevent the facility from locating in Sunnyside.\(^{37}\)

\(^{37}\) Oral history interview of Jones, R. conducted Nov. 12, 2015.
Civic clubs have also had to remind public officials of their promises. In the 1980s, civic clubs urged mayors and councilmembers to provide them with the services they were entitled to, such as fix potholes, collect trash, and fix prevalent water and sewer breaks. It was under this community pressure that the city of Houston passed a $4 million bond project to correct these issues.\(^{38}\)

In the early 2000s, the city of Houston began the process to convert the former Holmes Road Landfill into a solar farm and park without involving the surrounding Sunnyside community. However, in response to a request for proposals, a developer pointed out a more cost effective location for the solar farm and the city accepted. The lower cost at the alternative site was attributed to the additional cost of appropriately grading and capping the former landfill for future use, since it is currently only properly capped to be undeveloped. There is extensive evidence to show that the city placed the uneven cap when it closed the landfill in the 1970s.\(^{39}\) City officials have stated they are still interested in working with the community to redevelop the site in a way that is “economically feasible” to the city.\(^{40}\)

Unlike most majority white neighborhoods in the city, Sunnyside lacked deed restrictions to protect its homeowners from incompatible land uses. Given the city of Houston’s lack of zoning, this left Sunnyside vulnerable to any type of development that any property owner chose to bring into the neighborhood. The city targeted Sunnyside as a primary area for the construction of low income, government-subsidized rental housing. Given Sunnyside’s lack of effective deed restrictions and the city’s lack of zoning, there was little the neighborhood could do to resist the wave of subsidized multifamily development. Conventional market considerations do not operate in the case of project-based subsidized housing. Thus, the over-concentration of these apartments occurred. The large scale construction of this housing by both the public housing authority and by private developers using government funds quickly changed the character of the Sunnyside community from one of single-family homeownership for working-class families into an area of concentrated poverty.

\(^{38}\) Sunnyside Civic Club Fall Gala Newsletter, 2014.
\(^{40}\) Holmes Road Landfill: A US EPA Brownfields Sustainability Pilot.
and racial segregation for Houston’s poorest residents who relied on Section 8, public housing and subsidized housing to keep a roof over their heads.

Initially, the residents of Sunnyside were supportive of the introduction of affordable rental housing in the neighborhood. However, as white communities effectively prevented any subsidized government housing from being built within their neighborhoods, Sunnyside increasingly became the primary area for the construction of this type of housing. Sunnyside underwent a transition from a working class, homeowner neighborhood to an area of very high concentrated poverty and a majority of renters over the course of the 1970s and 80s, concerning longtime Sunnyside residents. In 1967, Sunnyside residents organized protests against slumlords who rented substandard rental housing while taking advantage of government subsidies.  

Yet these protests went unheeded by city hall and did not stop the continued concentration of subsidized rental housing in Sunnyside, they did not have to search for very long to find a major gut issue. With the help of the organizers, Sunnyside Housing Committee members launched a protest campaign against the real estate developers who were beginning to build slum housing in the area. In November 1966 approximately fifty people marched in front of the proposed building sites carrying signs that read ‘Don’t Move In’ and ‘I Wouldn’t Let My Dog Live in These Shacks.’ From Phelps, W.G. 2014. A people’s war on poverty: Urban politics and grassroots activists in Houston. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Most recently, the city of Houston passed
a land development ordinance that forces increased density on neighborhoods like Sunnyside, which the neighborhood is concerned will change the community’s character. Residents fear this will bring the same slum conditions to Sunnyside that it faced in the 1960s. The ordinance, Chapter 42, allows for development density increase city-wide to 27 single family residential dwelling units per acre, which was formerly an “urban” standard. Previously, the “suburban” standard was 8 units per acre, which included Sunnyside. To guard against this ordinance, communities must apply for minimum lot size protection with fifty-five percent of the neighborhood must support the application. Since the ordinance only applies to neighborhoods who do not already have deed restrictions stating a minimum lot size, Sunnyside is especially vulnerable. Many residents see this ordinance as a direct attack on their vulnerable neighborhood by city government, and fear increased density might worsen existing crime and infrastructure issues.

Today, Sunnyside residents understand that the city of Houston, through its policies and actions, is largely responsible for the most intractable problems the community faces. Having annexed the community, the city failed to provide an adequate level of the promised public services and used this community as a dumping ground for the things that wealthier neighborhoods in the city, particularly white neighborhoods, would not accept – in particular landfills and concentrations of families below the poverty level forced into the neighborhood by siting decisions for government subsidized housing.
By recounting the history of Sunnyside, we described the conditions of racial oppression and residential segregation that led to the establishment of Sunnyside and other Houston historic African-American suburban communities.

While Sunnyside residents recognize there are numerous issues that have risen as a result of discriminatory governmental policies and segregation, they have identified three main issues of concern in their communities to address through this plan:

• Youth and Education;
• Crime and Safety; and
• Community Development, Housing and Infrastructure.

This plan analyzes these three issues to:

• assess in detail the existing conditions and trends;
• state the vision from community residents;
• propose measurable goals to obtain the vision; and
• detail specific action steps that must be taken to reach the goals.
QUALITIES TO PRESERVE

Sunnyside residents are proud of many aspects of their community that must be preserved and enhanced in the future. The qualities mentioned most often include:

**Location.** Many residents value being less than a 15-minute drive away from major points of interest in Houston, such as downtown, Hobby Airport, the Medical Center, Texas Southern University and Rice University.

**Strong community identity, compassionate people and a proud heritage.** Sunnyside residents have a deep sense of community heritage, pride and respect for others. Many community members are knowledgeable of their community’s heritage and historical accomplishments. There is present in Sunnyside a profound sense of having struggled against many adversities for many years, most often at the hands of city government, across multiple generations in order to build a community. This value of this is complicated and difficult for nonresidents who do not understand Sunnyside’s history to understand and appreciate.

**Abundant and Supportive Church Community.** Families have no shortage of churches to choose from, since some residents claim Sunnyside has more churches than any other neighborhood in Houston. Residents are proud of their religious institutions, in part because they often fill gaps left by public and private sector services. For example, many churches have partnered with local food pantries to provide access to fresh foods in a neighborhood where over 70 percent of its residents live in a food desert.42 Moreover, churches provide opportunities for area residents from youth, elderly, and those who may have lost their way to bring about positive change in their community and build leadership skills. Sunnyside’s invaluable social capital is rooted in the churches.

Churches also attract many people who have left Sunnyside, thereby acting as “anchor institutions,” which keep people in touch with their community roots. These patrons form a basis of support for the community that extends beyond its boundaries. Former residents return each Sunday to Sunnyside’s churches to maintain their support networks.

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The Houston Independent School District (HISD) is an overall low-performing district. Children at Risk ranked HISD 417 out of 903 school districts in Texas and 23rd out of the 32 largest school districts in the state. About half of all Texas school districts are ranked better than HISD, and over 70 percent of large school districts are better.\(^\text{43}\) No wonder roughly half of the school-aged population (5-17) in Houston opt-out of HISD schools.\(^\text{44}\)

Minority neighborhoods typically send their children to HISD schools more than do white, affluent neighborhoods. This means that the failures of HISD hurt minorities more. HISD’s student demographics reflect this disparity. A disproportionate number of students who attend HISD schools are African-American or Hispanic compared to the city’s demographics. White non-Hispanic children make up 23% of Houston’s school-aged population, but only account for 8 percent of Houston’s public school population.\(^\text{45}\)

Those who do not or cannot opt out of Houston’s public schools are left to face grave inequity. Former HISD superintendent Terry Grier acknowledged just one form of inequity in his school district: gifted and talented programs in schools identify white students five times more often as gifted and talented than their African-American peers. Schools receive $400 more funding per gifted and talented student, thereby contributing to a growing funding disparity between HISD schools.\(^\text{46}\)

White non-Hispanic families in affluent areas of Houston are also choosing not to attend public schools in their communities, likely because these families have more resources to choose better education opportunities for this children. However, if they were to choose their neighborhood public schools, they would be choosing some of the best HISD has to offer.

In Sunnyside, HISD is the primary education provider. Children under 18 years of age make up 29 percent of Sunnyside’s population, which is a larger proportion than that of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Houston Rank</th>
<th>State Rank</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>4-Year Graduation Rate</th>
<th>TEA Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Elementary</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>3349</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Improvement required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bastian Elementary</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>3859</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Improvement Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reynolds Elementary</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>4033</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Met Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attucks Middle</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Met Standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodson School K-8</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>4199</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Improvement Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthing High</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>1193</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>Improvement Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sterling High</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1192</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>Improvement Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnegie Vanguard High</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Met Standard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*State rankings are by elementary, middle, and high schools. Elementary: Out of 4,359; Middle: Out of 2,062; High: Out of 1,193. Source: Children at Risk 2014 and Texas Education Agency Accountability Ratings 2013.

\(^{43}\) Children at Risk School District Rankings, 2015.

\(^{44}\) American Communities Survey, 2013-2014 1-year estimates.

\(^{45}\) HISD District Wide Profile, 2013-2014.

city overall (25%). There are approximately 6,000 school-aged children in Sunnyside.\textsuperscript{47} A little over 4,000 children attend neighborhood schools, some of which have larger attendance boundaries that span beyond Sunnyside. Families who choose to support and attend their local schools must face deteriorating quality in school performance.

Since most Sunnyside parents rely on community public schools for their children, they fear school closure. Nearby Jones High School was repurposed and Dodson Elementary was closed for consistently underperforming and low enrollment, issues Sunnyside schools suffer from as well.\textsuperscript{48} Schools are often the last remaining public institution in struggling neighborhoods. Closing these schools equates to pulling out the only public investment in the community, the final straw in disinvestment.

Moreover, closed schools do not benefit anyone in the process. Students will often end up attending equally under-resourced schools, keeping student performance stagnant or declining. Receiving schools often do not receive the resources they need to accommodate the new students. The school district often does not save any money closing a school due to renovating receiving schools, transporting students farther, and maintaining, demolishing, or fixing up the closed school.\textsuperscript{49}

Data reflect the Sunnyside community’s concerns. In the table below, Sunnyside schools were compared to Carnegie Vanguard High School, a premier school once located in the Sunnyside area, but was relocated by HISD in 2009.\textsuperscript{50} Sunnyside schools are failing students academically. Five out of the seven schools in Sunnyside are not meeting the standards set by the Texas Education Agency, while the other two are only one notch above.

Who Attends Sunnyside Schools?\textsuperscript{†}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The average Sunnyside school is:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>82% African American</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17% Hispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;1% White non-Hispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>92% economically disadvantaged</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78% at-risk*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>32% mobility rate</td>
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<tr>
<th>Of Sunnyside High Schools students:</th>
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<tr>
<td>36% are enrolled in AP/Pre-AP/IB courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>79% are enrolled in Career and Technology education</td>
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<tr>
<td>79% graduate in four years</td>
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<tr>
<td>16% dropout over 4 years</td>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The average HISD school is:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25% African American</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62% Hispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8% White non-Hispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81% economically disadvantaged</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69% at-risk</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19% mobility rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>81.6% graduate in four years</td>
<td>\textsuperscript{‡}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1% dropout over 4 years</td>
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\textsuperscript{†} Sunnyside schools are highly segregated, with a high percentage of minority and economically disadvantaged students. In Dallas ISD, administrators are taking action to create choice schools across the city so that schools do not have to reflect the demographics of their neighborhoods. Learn more in this video.

\textsuperscript{‡} “At-risk” is defined as having a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school due to circumstances that could jeopardize their ability to complete school, such as homelessness, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, serious health issues, domestic violence, transiency (as in the case of migrant-worker families), or other conditions, or it may refer to learning disabilities, low test scores, disciplinary problems, grade retentions, or other learning-related factors that could adversely affect the educational performance and attainment of some students. Source: http://edglossary.org/at-risk/

\textsuperscript{47} American Communities Survey, 2009-2013 5-year estimates.

failure. Children at Risk’s Achievement Index, which reflects student performance on the STAAR test and high school graduation rates, shows that neighborhood schools are worse than 88-99% of schools in the Houston area.51

Minority youth in schools also face an ever-increasing potential of criminalization due to school disciplinary policies that disproportionately impact African-American students. During the 2014-2015 school year, 70 percent of disciplinary incidents in pre-kindergarten through second grade involved African-American students, even though African-Americans make up just 25 percent of the district population. White students, who make up 8 percent of the district population, were involved in just 3 percent of the disciplinary incidents.52 Sunnyside schools are feeling the impact of this inequity as they have especially high disciplinary incident rates, well above the rate of 1 in 2 students districtwide (45%). At Woodson School (K-8), Attucks Middle and Sterling High, there are more disciplinary incidents than kids enrolled in the schools.53 Despite these statistics, the district refuses to revise a policy to prohibit suspensions or expulsions for pre-kindergarten through second-grade students for behavioral issues, a policy that states and school districts around the country are considering and implementing.54 HISD has said it delayed this policy due to the fact that the number of counselors district-wide has declined over the last five years. Some schools, including Sunnyside’s Worthing High, Woodson K-8, Young Elementary, Reynolds Elementary, and Attucks Middle, have no counselors on staff.55 Schools in areas with proportions of white non-Hispanics higher than the city average and poverty lower than the city average such as Bellaire High and Lamar High have at least five counselors on staff.

Attendance rates have declined over the last five years for all neighborhood schools with the exception of Woodson K-8 School. However, the school age population in Sunnyside has increased by 26% since 2010 and 42% since 2000, likely meaning that more families are choosing to enroll in charter or public schools outside of the neighborhood schools.

Four-year graduation rates have declined between 2010 and 2013 from 80% to 76% at Worthing and from 87% to 83% at Sterling.56 Districtwide, the graduation rate has been stagnated at 82% during the same time period, putting Worthing well below average for HISD. High schools with less than half of their student population economically disadvantaged and located in more affluent, less racially segregated parts of Houston have much higher graduation rates. Lamar High, for example, has had a 93% graduation rate for the last four years.

Four-year dropout rates are increasing in both of Sunnyside’s high schools, with Worthing...
dropout rates increasing from 16% in 2010 to 20% in 2013. Sterling dropout rates have also increased from 10% to 13% in the same time span. Districtwide, dropout rates have hovered around 11% for the last three years, meaning Worthing has reached a dropout rate nearly twice as high as the district overall. Lamar’s dropout rate has hovered around 3% since 2010.

In 2015, Grier announced the expansion of EMERGE, a program that encourages low-income, high-performing students to apply and attend Tier 1 and Ivy League institutions upon graduation. Funding for counselors will also be expanded to more high schools in an effort to increase college attendance rates.\textsuperscript{57} While this is good news for Sunnyside high schools, much more is needed from HISD to improve K through 12 education in this neighborhood. Students of all grades are struggling to reach their potential due to a lack of curriculum innovation, resources, and counseling services. Many students in Sunnyside face struggles every day that would make it difficult for anyone to excel in class, such as food and housing insecurity, drugs and violence, or lack of medical and mental health assistance. The city of Houston must work with HISD to not only improve schools themselves, but the lives of students outside of school.

\textsuperscript{57} HISD State of the Schools, 2015.
**Vision**

Sunnyside will have schools that raise the bar for neighborhood students, empathetic teachers with the resources to teach students of all learning styles, and ancillary programs and activities that expose students to new ideas and new people.

**Goals**

1. Sunnyside schools are high-quality, leading students on a path to success in careers and higher education
2. Sunnyside schools thrive from parent and community support
3. Schools and HISD are held accountable for the success and failure of Sunnyside schools

**Performance Indicators**

- Increase student attendance from 87% to 95% by 2020
- Percent of students graduating
- Percent of students going to college and/or percent of students getting trade certifications
- Improvement on school pride surveys and rigor perception
- Improvement on neighborhood-led school report card
- Increase enrollment to 2009 levels by 2020

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58 2009 enrollment levels were: Bastian Elementary: 761; Reynolds Elementary: 513; Young Elementary: 430; Attucks Middle: 581; Woodson School: 792; Sterling High: 1060; Worthing High: 1017 (HISD 5-year Reports, 2014).
Strategies

Goal 1: Sunnyside schools are high-quality, leading students on a path to success in careers and higher education.

Provide access to counseling and social services to help at-risk students succeed.

There is no clear sense behind how HISD distributes counselors to high schools. The three largest high schools in HISD have anywhere between 400 and 1,000 students assigned to one counselor. Worthing and Sterling high schools each have one counselor, making their ratio 672 to 1 and 1,037 to 1, respectively. The American School Counselor Association recommends one counselor for every 250 students.59

Having a sufficient number of school support staff such as counselors, nurses, and social workers helps reduce rates of disciplinary actions and provides support for at-risk students so they can focus on their learning. Sunnyside students must have access guidance counselors, health services and special supports for issues such as homelessness, abuse or teen pregnancy.

Incorporate additional instructional and supplemental instructional support to close grade deficiency gaps.

HISD’s program to reform the worst public middle and high schools has received mixed reviews of its ability to improve math and reading scores, especially long-term. The program, in particular, does not provide any supplemental reading assistance. Instead of entering all schools in the controversial Apollo 20 program, neighborhood schools should provide tutoring and supplemental instruction to boost student performance in both reading and math (reading at elementary school levels in particular). This could be carried out by community volunteers or high school mentors in elementary schools.

Offer certifications and college credit through ancillary programs.

Ancillary programs currently available in schools provide additional structure and practical learning opportunities and are already utilized by a large proportion of Sunnyside students. Participation in these programs also boost school funding and reduce a school’s risk of closure. Parents and community members want to make sure students have the skills and tools they need to either start a career or attend college when they graduate. Trades such as mechanical, plumbing, electrical and green jobs, college credit, or certificates should be offered to students through ancillary programs.

Use housing and economic development programs to increase child stability and reduce student turnover.

The Community in Schools Model

A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between a school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone—all day, every day, evenings and weekends.

Using public schools as hubs, community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of support and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities. Partners work together to ensure:

- Students attend school consistently and succeed academically
- Students are actively involved in learning and their community
- Families are increasingly involved with their children’s education
- Students are healthy - physically, socially and emotionally
- Communities are desirable places to live

Learn more at http://www.communityschools.org

59 ACSA Role Statement.
Students who change schools frequently are typically behind their peers by a year or more in reading and math, and are therefore more likely to repeat a grade or have low test scores. Other students can suffer by attending a school with a high rate of students without stable, long-term homes. Classroom time will be spent more on review and make-up work and stall the learning of all students. Teachers can become frustrated, leading to increased teacher turnover. Some schools with high percentages of mobile populations are teaching classes at a full grade below grade level. In order to improve stability, parents need to be able to find housing that is affordable, in quality condition, and appropriate for the size of their family. They also need nearby jobs to pay the bills.

Encourage and provide resources to schools to incorporate extended learning and enrichment opportunities inside and outside of class.

School should be a place where students are encouraged to dream big. Students should learn what is possible and then strive for more than that. Taking engaging field trips, hosting events on campus that incorporate new experiences, and bringing in guest speakers that have achieved the seemingly unthinkable will help open students’ minds.

In order to offer additional enrichment opportunities, it takes partnerships, and more importantly a budget, that can cover the costs. This is what some Houston charter schools do, where every teacher is required to include field experiences into their lesson plans. HISD has taken on important step in expanding opportunities for college visits to all of its high schools, but more needs to be done to expose students to more from kindergarten to high school.

Make daycare and pre-school available for all families in Sunnyside.

There is a high need for quality childcare in Sunnyside. However, many daycare and afterschool programs struggle due to lack of funding or support from schools. HISD and nonprofits should partner with existing daycare, preschool, and afterschool services to improve the quality and availability of these services.

Goal 2: Sunnyside takes pride in their schools, evidenced by more parental participation and community support

Organize listening sessions to learn what students are interested in, what their needs are and how they would like to improve their schools.

Residents don’t feel as though students’ interests are being tended to. Luckily, there are many case studies of schools and communities empowering students to

Students as Allies in Improving Houston Schools

A program set up by the nonprofit organization What Kids Can Do aimed to:

• Promote discussion among students, parents, principals and the community about central issues in teaching and learning
• Bring student research and ideas of these issues to a public forum to discuss realistic next steps toward change
• Model student-teacher, youth-adult partnerships through the program and future projects

Houston A-Plus Challenge and Greater Houston Writing Project were the local partners on the project. They conducted a student survey in seven diverse high schools and the students presented the findings in a creative way (through skits, poems, songs, and videos) at a Youth Summit with students and teachers from 15 high schools in Houston. The teachers and students then set out to work on projects at their school, making improvements that were deemed important by the surveys.

Learn more: SAA Houston Final Report
identify problems at their school, develop a project to help fix the problem, and take action to make improvements.

Provide specific and ongoing opportunities for parents to be partners in education and community members to continue to support their schools.

High-performing schools know that it takes dedicated teachers, students and parents to improve schools and education. Sunnyside community members also want to help their neighborhood schools in any ways they can.

From tutoring and mentorship to improving the way schools look, many residents are looking for a way to make a difference. Neighborhood schools must create specific ways for parents, students and community members to become involved in the life of their schools. Parent-teacher organizations must be revived with a true voice in their schools. Organize frequent (at least quarterly) meetings and check ins between principals, PTA, and the community for collaboration and accountability.

### The Good Life Alliance

Roberto Rivera founded the Good Life Alliance and Fulfill the Dream program to ignite disengaged youth through innovative curriculum coupled with music, media, and movement. He piloted his program in Chicago high schools and has since taken it nationwide. It targets at-risk students to teach students leadership, relationships, and citizenship skills.

Fulfill the Dream is a ten-lesson workshop that blends hip hop, media, reading, and reflective writing and touches on everything from consumerism to civil rights, healthy relationships to grief and forgiveness. The program also provides an opportunity for students to create an action plan to fulfill their dreams. The end of the series culminates in a creative piece from each student to reflect on what they’ve learned and plan how they will use this knowledge to serve others.

Fulfill the Dream has boosted attendance, GPAs, and graduation rates for students who have participated in the program.

Learn more: Fulfilling the Dream: The Power of Hip Hop and The Good Life Alliance

### Dual College Credit Pathways

Join efforts with area community colleges to provide high school students the opportunity to earn college credit and high school credit through concurrent enrollment with community college while still in high school. This option is currently not available in Sunnyside and specifically, Worthing High School.

By participating in this program, money is saved on college tuition. Participating students and their parents benefit by significant savings on both immediate and long term costs of a college education. Community colleges typically waive tuition and fees for dual credit students.

Participation in this program accelerates time to complete degree and readiness to enter professional job market. Students can earn up to two years of college credit that can transfer to a Texas public higher educational institution. Students also can obtain college credit toward a career and technical education workforce degree or certificate that can position them for unique employment opportunities upon graduation from a high school.

Students find that dual credit programs establish skills to be successful in college such as following a syllabus, meeting classroom and course requirements, conducting themselves appropriately, using self-discipline, and improving and applying higher thinking skills.

Learn more: http://www.hccs.edu/district/students/dualcredit/
Outside of a voice in school policy, schools could also supply a garden area for parents to adopt a plot and plant flowers, or a regular clean-up day to beautify the campus.

**Foster a relationship with youth by offering opportunities for youth to get involved in the community.**

Sunnyside residents want to instill community pride in their schools, but also want students to be proud of their community. Each church, civic club, business, and community organization should have attractive ways for students to get involved and learn about their community. Moreover, schools can partner with area businesses, nonprofits and public institutions to provide job and internship opportunities and offer programs for students to be mentors and students to be mentored.

**Provide neighborhood services in schools, utilizing schools as community centers.**

The community should work with the school to allow school amenities to become community amenities where appropriate. Schools should allow organizations to use auditoriums or gyms as gathering spaces for meetings and events open to the public.

**Goal 3: Schools and HISD are held accountable for the success and failure of Sunnyside schools.**

Perform an assessment of grade deficiencies. HISD must take the time

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**Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative: Youth Development**

Youth have been an integral part of DSNI since its beginning in 1984 when Roxbury, Massachusetts residents took back their community from arson, dumping, and disinvestment. There’s something for everyone ages 0-24 at DSNI, as well as parents and concerned community members. Below are just a few of their initiatives:

- Dudley Children Thrive helps families with children ages 0-5 to prepare for success in school and life. Residents, families, and organizations support parents as First Teachers to help children feel smart, loved, and confident to succeed. The program focuses on Early Literacy, Nutrition, and Wellness.

- The Dudley Youth Council holds weekly meetings to plan event and educational activities for youth in the neighborhood. The Youth Committee is a part of the DSNI board of directors and provides direction and strategies for educational and career opportunities available to youth in the community.

- Youth organizers are hired by DSNI throughout the school year and summer. Organizers have helped residents make a documentary supporting early literacy, build raised bed gardens, and plan community landscape projects.

- GOTCHA (Get Off the Corner Hanging Around) was initially a summer youth employment collaborative with nearby neighborhoods that has since become a school year employment program with events, outreach, and advocacy to increase the number of quality jobs for youth.

- College Bound introduces students to post-secondary opportunities through retreats, college visits, mentoring by area college students, and workshops on the application and financial aid process.

- Young Alumni Network engages young people after high school to provide further leadership opportunities in the community, as well as resources and connections to be successful in college, career and life.

Learn more: DSNI Youth Opportunities
to identify where they are falling short in providing African-American and Hispanic students in Houston with an education that will provide them with upward mobility after graduation. Administrators owe it to communities like Sunnyside to: 1) identify strengths and weaknesses of neighborhood schools; 2) perform a comprehensive review of district policies and external barriers that prevent schools success; and 3) locate specific opportunities in tools such as school budgets, curriculum, staffing and other assessments to make real, lasting improvements.

School assessments should include:
- student grade deficiencies;
- administrative and programmatic spending;
- teach-student ratio;
- teacher quality, levels of experience and qualities that make teachers effective;
- feeder school programs and shortcomings impacting performances at higher level schools;
- measures of school climate and discipline issues;
- access to wrap-around supports for students; and
- measures of parent engagement.

The entire assessment and plan should take a full school year to complete, engaging students, parents and teachers as partners throughout all stages. Understanding the needs and problems faced by these three groups is essential to moving forward and building better schools.

**National Church Adopt-A-School Initiative**

As schools become more open to the community, there will be more opportunity for the community to get involved in schools. Churches already offer food and clothing to families, but perhaps more formal partnerships with schools could unfold.

The Turn Around Agenda, a program started by a senior pastor in Dallas, spurs proactive intervention to address the needs of urban youth and families in Dallas. It has since become a national model for church and school partnerships, which are established to effect positive social change in the community. The program focuses on four main aspects of public school outreach:

- Technology and Education Institute (adult literacy, language learning, GED prep, computer literacy)
- Family Care Pregnancy Center (pregnancy services, counseling, education)
- Human Needs Assistance (food pantry, thrift store, counseling, housing assistance)
- Mentoring, Afterschool and Summer Programs

Learn more: The Turnaround Agenda

**Case Study of Collaboration**

Webb Middle School and Reagan High School are two low-income schools in Austin, TX and both faced closure under the state's accountability law. Parents, administrators, teachers and local businesses worked together to create a community school turnaround plan. In 2008, before undertaking this plan, Reagan High School's graduation rate was 47% and the campus struggled to keep their doors open. As of 2014, the graduation rate is 82%.

Grant writers available to Sunnyside schools find funds for additional programs/services. Residents want to look into other funding opportunities to support afterschool programs and other enriching activities for students for which HISD provides little or no funding. Private schools have grant writers on campus and residents would like the same for their public schools.

Promote a school staffing structure that cultivates cultural competency, collaboration and high expectations. HISD administrators and staff should actively be champions for black and brown communities at every level of the district. Need to be more sensitive to and understanding of the needs of black and brown students. Hiring educators and administrators who empathize with these communities, especially by dealing with adversity themselves, would be a step in the right direction for communities like Sunnyside. Professional development workshops regarding working with diverse and at-risk students should be required at all levels. The Houston Independent School District is characterized by an administration which is very heavily skewed white in the student population which is heavily children of color. It’s not just the optics of this that are bad. Sunnyside residents feel the repercussions of this when the school district allows an entire community’s schools to fail.

Implement a well-rounded, culturally-relevant curriculum that prepares students for college and careers. Community leaders have pointed toward the misrepresentation of history in books issued by the district, which was made a national issue when a Pearland mother learned that African enslavement in the 1500s and 1800s was referred to as migration of “workers” to the U.S. \(^\text{61}\) HISD must ensure history books are accurate and acknowledge the successes of black and brown communities. HISD should distribute an approved supplementary book list that accounts for African-American and Latino culture, requiring teachers to incorporate some of these readings into their curriculum. This should include the culturally and geographically relevant history of Sunnyside.

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<th>Stage</th>
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<td>Long-term</td>
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CRIME & SAFETY

NO TRESPASSING
In 2015, a Census tract in Sunnyside was ranked the 2nd most dangerous neighborhood in the country, according to Neighborhood Scout crime statistics, up from two years ago, when it was ranked the 6th most dangerous neighborhood. With a violent crime rate nearly triple that of the city of Houston and roughly a murder a month, residents want to tackle crime issues in their community before they become like those of other large cities, such as Chicago and Baltimore.

Traditional crime control methods are not working in Sunnyside. Houston’s policing strategies have resulted in extremely high numbers of residents being incarcerated and their lives ruined. Yet even with this high rate of incarceration crime levels remain high.

Sunnyside residents are a caring community yet one which is blighted by violent, prolific crime and drug use. Current anticrime approaches fail to adequately leverage the power of community to prevent community members from resorting to crime. Sunnyside residents want to develop a dialogue between people engaging in crime and community members and leaders who can seek to assert more positive values and engage in more proactive interventions to
Sunnyside Plan

Residents have stated that it often takes police an hour or more to respond to a call, if they ever arrive. This is corroborated by HPD’s response time data by police beat.

The table below shows the average response times to calls fielded by the Houston Police Department for 2010 to 2014. These times are categorized by the “Priority Response Code” which is based on the severity of the caller’s emergency. An “E” indicates the most urgent calls, such as active pursuits or an officer in need of assistance, followed by life threatening situations and property crimes (prioritized based on whether they are in progress or already happened), and finally minor infractions and municipal ordinance violations. While HPD is, on average, meeting their response time goals for the most serious calls, they are failing to meet their goals for less serious crimes citywide.

Average response times for Sunnyside’s beat (14D10) are shown below. Although citywide response times have been failing to meet the department’s goals for Codes 3-5 since 2014, HPD has failed to respond to respond to these codes in Sunnyside for the last four consecutive years. In the case of Codes 4 and 5, Sunnyside residents, on average, must wait well over an hour for an officer to respond to their call. This is well above the department’s

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HPD report to city council on response time goals and actual response time averages city wide in minutes. Priority Response Codes Key: E = Officer or firefighter assist; 1 = Threat to life in progress; 2 = Life threat occurred or property crime in progress (urgent); 3= life-threatening delayed report, property crime occurred (non-emergency); 4= serious criminal incident (non-emergency); 5=minor property crime or municipal offense (non-emergency).

Source: Houston Police Report to City Council, September 2014.
goal of around half an hour. Average response times in emergency calls have also been higher than the department’s goals. In an area with extremely high levels of reported crime like Sunnyside it is doubly important to have a rapid and adequate police response.

**INCARCERATION**

Sunnyside and other predominantly minority neighborhoods not only experience high crime rates, but also have higher rates of individuals admitted to prisons. Sunnyside’s 77051 ZIP code had the second highest admission rate in the city at 32.94 new prisoners per 1,000 adults, meaning that for every 1,000 adults in 77051, about 33 adults are going to prison each year. Sunnyside was second to Kashmere Gardens. The zip code 77033, which includes a portion of Sunnyside and neighboring South Park, had the third highest admission rate of 28.9. For context, Harris County’s overall admission rate is 5.75 new prisoners per 1,000 adults.

When prisoners are released, they return to Sunnyside at a rate among the highest in the city. Zip code 77051 had the highest prisoner release rate in 2008 at 33.91 prisoners per 1,000 adults. Kashmere Gardens and the Settegast area had the second and third highest prisoner release rates. Harris County overall release rates are 5.35 prisoners per 1,000 adults.
Recently-released prisoners need a support system in place that simply isn’t present in Sunnyside. Support services to address substance abuse and mental health problems, access to jobs and education, and a stable home life all contribute to reducing a released prisoner’s chance of recidivism.63

63 Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, 2012. “Safer, smarter, and more cost-efficient approaches to reducing crime in Texas.”
Vision
Sunnyside will be a place where residents feel safe due to a responsive police presence, a focus on crime prevention, and a local culture that cultivates respect amongst its citizens and thereby maintains a low rate of crime.

Goals
1. Improved police response and protection to enhance witnesses’ willingness to report crime
2. Foster a more trusting police-community relationship
3. Emphasize crime prevention, not reaction
4. Support the successful reintegration of a person’s returning from prison into the community

Performance Indicators
• Reduction in 2015 violent and property crime rates
• Reduction in average response rates among all call codes
• Number of police officers on beat
• Increase in proportion of crimes with a witness
• Average response time in Sunnyside
• Enrollment in youth law enforcement programs
• Resident perception surveys
Strategies

**Goal 1: Improved police response and protection to enhance witnesses’ willingness to report crime**

Ensure residents feel safe to report crime and provide witness statements. Since residents say they often wait hours for police to respond to a call in Sunnyside, residents feel that they are a very low priority to police officers. Some fear retaliation from those causing crimes if they speak up as a witness. If more witnesses could feel comfortable enough to come forward with knowledge of crimes committed in their community, potentially fewer crimes would go unsolved.

Part of encouraging witness statements Increasing willingness to provide witness statements may involve changing policy to improve police protections for witnesses of crimes.

**Goal 2: Continue to foster a more trusting police-community relationship**

Assess existing youth law enforcement programs and national best practices for youth and police programs. Many residents are interested in law enforcement’s youth programs, but often they are unaware of the outcomes of the programs or when they inquire programs are full. More needs to be done by the police department to understand whether these programs are effective in their intended purposes and to expand the ones that are. This should involve extensive community engagement with area youth and parents in higher crime areas such as Sunnyside to understand their needs. The city should then research national best practices for police programs that would better engage youth in law enforcement activities and meet the needs to Houston families. Mentoring or training from HPD could help foster a homegrown police force, supporting community policing efforts.

**Establish a community policing model in Sunnyside.** Traditional policing often focuses on responding to emergency calls to protect civilians from criminals. Community policing, in contrast, assists civilians in creating a safe and orderly environment by not only responding to criminal activity in progress, but by also utilizing civilian education, proactive patrol techniques, increased accountability, and officer discretion. Community policing is an opportunity for community residents and police to learn more about one another and to break down dangerous stereotypes. Some steps Houston could take to move toward a community policing model include:

- Appoint police officers to beats who live in the beat;
- Require officers to perform proactive patrol techniques such as bike and foot patrols;
- Encourage police to get to know neighborhood youth by instituting a monthly sports game or other more informal afterschool interactions between police and the community; and
- Institute implicit community bias training for the community and police to attend (require the training for all officers).

**Implement a pathways program for youth and young adults from high-crime neighborhoods to work in local law enforcement.** HPD recently admitted that only 20% of Houston police officers live in the city of Houston, a figure that adds to the feeling of “them” vs “us” and distrust of police. This statistic prompted the department to propose to incentivize police officers to live in high crime neighborhoods like Sunnyside. Instead of trying to entice cops who live in other areas to come live in Sunnyside, HPD should establish a program to recruit and train people from the Sunnyside neighborhood to be police officers. Sunnyside residents should receive incentives to remain residents of the neighborhood in

65 Driessen, K. “Council punts on program to pay officers to live in high-crime areas.” Houston Chronicle.
order to establish a community-based police force.

This program could go beyond “community policing” approach to a more grassroots “community-based” policing. The police department could start by partnering with area high schools and community colleges to develop a program to get those who are most vulnerable to crime and gang life on the right side of the law.

Establish Sunnyside as a laboratory for alternative community crime intervention techniques. Sunnyside could be a Safe Neighborhoods Laboratory where community residents, the police department and universities work together to develop alternative, effective practices for community policing, crime prevention and post-incarceration community reintegration. In order to affect this, public funds should be dedicated to the experiment and critical community institutions including churches, schools and civic associations should be brought together with law enforcement officials, sociologists, criminal justice reformers and academic experts to define a new paradigm for crime prevention.

**Goal 3: Focus on crime prevention, rather than reaction**

Improve educational attainment, employment and community involvement among youth and formerly incarcerated.

Crime rates are higher where there are fewer education or job opportunities. Studies have shown that increased educational attainment reduces criminal activity.66 Focusing on school improvements, afternoon programs and jobs for youth, and re-entry or second chance programs and jobs for ex-offenders will help prevent crime in the long-run.

**Break the school-to-prison pipeline.**

Crime and education go hand in hand. Young students who are expelled or suspended are up to 10 times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not.67 The traditional form of discipline leads children exhibiting behavioral problems or possible mental health problems from suspensions and expulsions to alternative schools and eventually juvenile court. This process of pushing children out of schools and into the criminal justice system is deemed the school-to-prison pipeline. In order to give students the best chance to succeed, researchers and local subject-matter experts recommend the following:

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**Restorative Discipline in Texas**

Restorative Justice is a paradigm shift in how students are disciplined. Like traditional student discipline, Restorative Discipline comes from the criminal justice system. Restorative Discipline gives a voice to all parties in a dispute, aiming to repair relationships between a victim and offender by helping a student understand the harm caused and gives them an opportunity to directly make amends.

Ed White Middle School in San Antonio is nearing the end of a three-year pilot program instituting Restorative Discipline starting in the sixth grade. In 2012, the school had some of the highest disciplinary sanction rates in the district. In its first year, there was an 87 percent drop in off-campus suspension and 44 percent decrease in total suspensions. In the second year, total suspension dropped 57 percent. Test scores also improved. African-American students in particular, showed improvement in passing sixth grade reading and seventh grade math. Special education students’ reading and math scores improved by 42 percent and 50 percent respectively.

Learn more: Ed White Middle School RD Evaluation 2012-2013 and Ed White Middle School RD Evaluation 2013-2014
• Require teacher and administrator training on research-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Restorative Discipline, which have been shown to improve student behavior and graduation rates;

• Create a legal track to expunge records of youth and young adults under 24 years of age;

• Establish a clearly defined policy for teachers to mark students absent to prevent subjectivity that may contribute to disproportionate number of minorities and boys being truant;

• Provide a first line of defense against mental illness in schools by providing counselors and nurses, especially in schools with high proportions of economically disadvantaged students; and

• Partner with local nonprofit organizations and churches to fill the gaps in providing a safe place to continue studies if a student is suspended.

**Monitor and enhance programming of group homes and other institutions that could help rehabilitate ex-offenders.** All organizations that provide services for ex-offenders should coordinate their services to maximize effectiveness. The community should monitor these programs based on best practices to ensure clients are receiving services that emphasize rehabilitation, thereby becoming a productive and involved citizen. However, this does not mean that Sunnyside should have to bear the burden of providing all housing and services for formerly incarcerated individuals in the city. People with felonies who were released from prison should have opportunities to live in other neighborhoods, especially when they are not a former Sunnyside residents. In other words, Sunnyside should have the means to successfully reintroduce its sons and daughters following a felony conviction, but it should not have to bear the burden of other communities. Additionally, persons returning to the community should have alternatives to choose to live in the community that provides them the best option to find employment, education and safety. In some instances they may need to start life anew outside the community they were living in at the time of their arrest and incarnation.

**Perform crime and safety prevention seminars at least quarterly.** Many residents appreciate police participation in community events, such as civic clubs, block parties and National Night Out. Police officers should provide crime prevention and other useful information at least quarterly in conjunction with community events such as civic club meetings. If no event is scheduled, officers should hold their own. Although online information is always available, it cannot substitute for regular interaction with residents of the Sunnyside.

**Expand cite-and-release program to all victimless marijuana possessions less than 2 ounces regardless of criminal history.** On January 1, 2016, the Harris County District Attorney is making offering a pre-trial diversion program mandatory in all agencies in the county. The program, offered to first-time offenders caught carrying less than two ounces of marijuana, includes fines, community service and drug education classes in lieu of a citation, charges and a record. While this a step in the right direction, no one should have to incur additions to their criminal record for a low-level offense on a drug that is becoming legal or decriminalized in states across the country.68

**Goal 4: Support and grow community care services**

Sunnyside residents believe respect and good citizenship begin with the family. Therefore, residents have suggested quality services for young mothers, parents, and general community members be offered, such as teen and young adult parenting classes, community dialogue to increase respect for each other, and family counseling centers.

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68 Rogers, B. Nov. 6, 2015. “DA: Marijuana now means a citation, not a ride to jail.” *Houston Chronicle.*
Prioritize prisoner re-entry services in neighborhoods that receive the most released prisoners, such as Sunnyside. Prisoner re-entry services can be difficult to find upon release. Until a more comprehensive prisoner re-entry program that provides housing and jobs throughout the city for those released from prison, services need to be offered where prisoners are being released. The goal should be to make it easier for ex-offenders to find these services by putting them in the neighborhoods they go. Services should include substance abuse and mental health.

Amend PHA occupancy and admissions standards related to criminal backgrounds and support changes at a federal level to provide ex-offenders with government housing.

Housing policy is splitting up families who have a member with criminal history. Moreover, subsidized housing policies are continuing to punish those who have done their time for their crime. Since 2011, HUD has been allowing public housing authorities to exercise discretion when it comes to criminal background policies for admission to subsidized housing.

Based on the problems outlined by the Shriver Report, HUD recently provided a list of best practices to encourage PHAs to provide “second chances” to those with criminal records:69

- **Limiting lookback periods.** Some PHAs administer a 12-month lookback period for drug crimes and 24-month lookback period for violent and property crimes.
- **Avoid using arrest records to deny applicants.** An arrest does not mean a conviction. Limit background screenings to convictions.
- **Specify standards for what constitutes criminal activity.** Enumerate specific factors that will be evaluated in a criminal background check.
- **Allow applicants to provide mitigating circumstances regarding criminal background checks.**
- **Allow formerly incarcerated individuals who have been recently released to be added to an existing voucher of a family member** if all parties consent and the individual agrees to several months of support services from nonprofit organizations.
- **Hire reentry specialists to coordinate between formerly incarcerated tenants and their landlord and treatment provider.**

Houston Housing Authority’s current tenant screening process goes against many of these national best practices, namely: 1) rejecting an applicant if any household member has had any criminal activity in the last five years; 2) failing to specify standards for what constitutes criminal activity or “criminal acts”; and failing to limit lookback periods or having too long of lookback periods.70

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70 Houston Housing Authority. FY 2016. “Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy,” pg. 9
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Associated Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Ensure residents feel safe to report crime and provide witness statements.</td>
<td>Houston Police Department</td>
<td>Goal 1: Improved police response and protection to enhance witnesses’ willingness to report crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assess existing youth law enforcement programs and national best practices for youth and police programs.</td>
<td>Houston Police Department</td>
<td>Goal 2: Foster a more trusting police-community relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implement a pathways program for youth and young adults from high-crime neighborhoods to work in local law enforcement.</td>
<td>Houston Police Department</td>
<td>Goal 2: Foster a more trusting police-community relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor and enhance programming of group homes and other institutions that could help rehabilitate ex-offenders.</td>
<td>Texas Department of Criminal Justice</td>
<td>Goal 3: Focus on crime prevention, rather than reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perform crime and safety prevention seminars at least quarterly.</td>
<td>Houston Police Department</td>
<td>Goal 3: Focus on crime prevention, rather than reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term/Long-term</td>
<td>Establish a community policing model in Sunnyside.</td>
<td>Houston Police Department</td>
<td>Goal 2: Foster a more trusting police-community relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Break the school-to-prison pipeline.</td>
<td>HISD, Community Organizations</td>
<td>Goal 3: Focus on crime prevention, rather than reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amend PHA occupancy and admissions standards related to criminal backgrounds and support changes at a federal level to provide ex-offenders with government housing.</td>
<td>Houston Housing Authority</td>
<td>Goal 4: Support and grow community care services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Establish Sunnyside as a laboratory for alternative community crime intervention techniques.</td>
<td>Houston Police Department, Independent researchers</td>
<td>Goal 2: Foster a more trusting police-community relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve educational attainment, employment and community involvement among youth and formerly incarcerated.</td>
<td>HISD, Houston Community College, Houston Economic Development Department, Department of Neighborhoods, Community organizations</td>
<td>Goal 3: Focus on crime prevention, rather than reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expand cite-and-release program to all victimless marijuana possessions less than 2 ounces regardless of criminal history.</td>
<td>Harris County District Attorney, City of Houston elected officials</td>
<td>Goal 3: Focus on crime prevention, rather than reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prioritize prisoner re-entry services in neighborhoods that receive the most released prisoners, such as Sunnyside.</td>
<td>Harris County Mental Health, nonprofit organizations</td>
<td>Goal 4: Support and grow community care services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
History teaches us that Houston city government has deliberately created and maintained a hierarchy of neighborhoods citywide, one that compounds advantages for middle and upper-class white neighborhoods, and compounds the disadvantages for low income neighborhoods of color.

This is part of a common pattern of discrimination against African-American communities. Texas civil rights attorneys Mike Daniel and Laura B. Beshara describe these practices by cities directed against African-American neighborhoods this way:

“Segregation continues to be functional for local governments. It allows government to save money by providing unequal services to a less politically powerful population. Segregation avoids inflicting unpopular burdens such as living near facilities such as sewage treatment plants and landfills on more politically powerful populations.

“The results of the barriers will be to subject minority families to either a lower level of benefits or a higher degree of disadvantages or to both. Segregation is not done to give minorities more of the good stuff. Once in place, these barriers inflict another harm over and above the material effects of the discrimination. The residents of the underserved and over-burdened neighborhoods are also stigmatized by the rest of the community who ascribe the attributes of the neighborhood to its residents.”

The city’s denial of “the good stuff” to Sunnyside in terms of infrastructure and public facilities has been documented throughout this plan. In this section we turn our attention to another form of discriminatory practices by city, state and federal governments against Sunnyside. We examine how government has acted to deny housing opportunities to poor people of color in wealthier and whiter neighborhoods of Houston while deliberately concentrating poverty housing in Sunnyside and other lower-income African-American neighborhoods. The effect of these governmental practices is devastating on both individual families who need subsidized housing and on neighborhoods of color where that subsidized housing is exclusively sited.

The extreme concentration of poverty in Sunnyside is not a naturally occurring phenomenon. Public opinion surveys have shown for decades that African-Americans tend to prefer a racially integrated neighborhood.71

The problem is that a racially integrated neighborhood is very hard to find. In the words of historian Andrew Weise:

“Racism not only limited black access to employment, credit, and public facilities, but it ensured that most African-Americans lived in a racially separate and materially unequal world. Housing discrimination hemmed them in, efforts to segregate schools and other public facilities affected people regardless of class, and other distinctly spatial practices—such as redlining, commercial disinvestment, industrial polluting, and political gerrymandering—compounded race and class inequalities, imposing a burden on everyone who lived in black neighborhoods and limiting the empowering potential of black space.”

Tragically, the type of conditions that drove African-Americans to reject the overcrowded, segregated, physical and environmentally blighted conditions and substandard housing found in the old inner city neighborhoods of Houston a century ago are being maintained today through public policy in Sunnyside.

The result is the same as 100 years ago:

many would-be residents with the economic means to do so reject a blighted community for housing opportunities in other neighborhoods and especially in increasingly distant suburbs. The forces that maintain these conditions are still in place after more than 100 years.

Racial and economic segregation resulting in extreme concentrations of poverty is produced by concentrating the development of government-subsidized housing for extremely low income renters in communities like Sunnyside while blocking the development of any government-subsidized housing in higher income, majority white neighborhoods of Houston. This not only denies low income people of color the opportunity to choose where to live, a right under federal and state law, but it hurts Sunnyside as a community by upsetting the balance of homeowners to renters and the balance of working households to non-working households.

Research is clear that the mere presence of people in poverty and the presence of subsidized housing for the poor generally does not have a negative impact on a neighborhood until the numbers become very high. The effect of poverty concentration appears of little consequence until the percentages exceed 20 percent. At that point the over concentration of poor households is associated with poorer economic, educational, and health outcomes. The longer the imbalance is present, the more harm it does in terms of multigenerational familial poverty. Poverty in Sunnyside has reached 35 percent.

The city of Houston has historically over-concentrated subsidized and low income rental housing in Sunnyside, and along with the Houston Housing Authority, continues to do so today.

The declines in homeownership, increases in substandard and abandoned housing, massive increases in government subsidized housing, high level of families living below poverty present huge and immediate problems to Sunnyside. Each of these problems can be traced directly to government policies.

The number of occupied housing units has risen gradually since 1990, but the occupancy rate has decreased over that same time due to more vacant, abandoned and derelict homes and rental units, thereby contributing to blight and crime. In the face of increased vacancies from 1990 to 2013, Sunnyside saw a net gain of 945 housing units overall, or about 11 percent gain in the last 23 years.

implications." Presentation at the ESRC Seminar, St. Andrews University, Scotland, UK, 4–5.

At the same time, the number of owner-occupied homes decreased by 866 units (19%). Homeownership declined from 60 percent to 48 percent, while renter occupied units increased by 1,580 units (53%) and the neighborhood’s proportion of renters increased from 40 percent to 55 percent. This is an alarming transition with devastating implications for community character.

Over the last 23 years, Sunnyside has become a majority renter neighborhood. Robust homeownership percentages are a sign of neighborhood stability, indicating that residents have a financial investment in the neighborhood, and therefore care about the long-term quality of the neighborhood’s amenities, such as schools, businesses and other homes. In Sunnyside, the number of single family homes has inched up over the last decade, but single family housing is still declining as a share of housing types.

The following table shows that a faster increase in construction of multifamily and attached units is largely the reason the neighborhood is now majority-renter.

Multifamily units have increased by 47 percent in the last twenty years, while single family units have increased by 3 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Occupied Housing Units</th>
<th>Total Housing Units</th>
<th>Percent Occupied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>8,249</td>
<td>9,782</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>8,250</td>
<td>9,823</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7,625</td>
<td>8,451</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>7,535</td>
<td>8,837</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rapid growth of multifamily units in Sunnyside is largely due to the development of government-approved affordable housing units added to the community in recent years. As shown in the table below, the Sunnyside neighborhood has nine multifamily developments financed by low income housing tax credit and project-based voucher containing 2,219 total units. This represents almost half of all renter occupied housing and over 72 percent of all housing that is not single family detached. These are by far the highest ratios of subsidized housing in any Houston neighborhood.

Compounding the problem posed by the extreme overconcentration of government-subsidized housing in Sunnyside is the nature of the housing inside these subsidized apartment developments. More than 95 percent of all units in the low income housing tax credit properties are set aside exclusively to be occupied by low income families. In Sunnyside, multifamily units are almost exclusively occupied by low income families of color dependent upon government rent subsidies. While rental housing is not inherently bad for neighborhoods (and nor are low-income families), increased concentration of poverty coupled with a decline in homeownership exacerbates problems around crime, education and housing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number Detached</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number Attached</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Number (10 or more units)</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>6,726</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1,637</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1,443</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>6,196</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1,203</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>6,510</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Sunnyside, multifamily units are almost exclusively occupied by low income families of color dependent upon government rent subsidies. While rental housing is not inherently bad for neighborhoods (and nor are low-income families), increased concentration of poverty coupled with a decline in homeownership exacerbates problems around crime, education and housing.
developments. This means that public policy today requires developments typically be operated so that no more than one third of the tenants are extremely low income households.

A household is determined to be “housing burdened” if they spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. Housing cost burden varies by income group and whether a household rents or owns.\(^7\) According to Census ACS 2014, unsurprisingly, the poorest households in Sunnyside are the most likely to be housing burdened. Of the 40 percent of households in Sunnyside earn below $20,000 per year, 29 percent of these households are housing burdened. Any household making below $24,250 are considered extremely low income in Harris County. These extremely low-income households are more likely to be housing burdened or live in unsafe conditions either due to inability to maintain their homes. Further, market rental housing meeting the needs of this income group are almost always poorly maintained.

The next highest housing burden is on households earning between $20,000 and $35,000 annually. These households account for 23 percent of Sunnyside’s population, and 13 percent are cost burdened. These income levels roughly equate to households earning between 30 and 50 percent median family income in Harris County.

### Household Income Limits, Harris County, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Category</th>
<th>% of Area median income</th>
<th>Top of Income Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Low Income</td>
<td>0 to 30</td>
<td>$24,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Low Income</td>
<td>31 to 50</td>
<td>$34,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Income</td>
<td>51 to 80</td>
<td>$55,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris County Median</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$69,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Based on a household of four in Harris County

The 4-person Low-Income limits are based on 30%, 50%, and 80% of median family income estimated for Harris County, Texas. HIMA

**Source:** HUD FY 2015 Income Limits

### Households Spending Over 30% of Income on Housing Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Households spending 30% or more</th>
<th>Households in this income range (Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $20,000</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 to $34,999</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$35,000 to $49,999</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 to $74,000</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,000 or more</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** ACS 5 YR 2014 Financial Characteristics

In Sunnyside, Fair Market Rents are high compared to the median rent of $798.50. For owners renting to households needing
two or more bedrooms, they may be able to ask more for rent by opting into the Section 8 program than they could on the broader rental market. As household size increases and the need for more bedrooms increase, renting to Section 8 tenants becomes more lucrative for the owner. This may be one factor in the building of new multi-bedroom homes and duplexes in Sunnyside in the past couple of years.

It is very likely this process of landlords opting into the Section 8 program for higher rent rates is likely contributing to the extremely high concentration of subsidized housing and poverty in Sunnyside.

Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs, formerly known as Section 8 Vouchers) are rent vouchers issued by the Houston Housing Authority to very low and extremely low income households to use to rent a housing unit in the private housing market. HHA has 17,000 households using vouchers to pay their rent. Because private landlords can legally discriminate against renters using vouchers under Texas law (many other states prohibit such discrimination) the residences of voucher holders are disproportionately concentrated in lower income African-American neighborhoods. Among the 88 super neighborhoods in Houston, Sunnyside has the third highest concentration of voucher holders with 703 families relying on a voucher to afford a place to live there.

The fact that many landlords with apartments outside high poverty neighborhoods of color will not accept HCVs thwarts a family’s ability to choose where to live with their voucher and often forces them to compete for a limited supply of apartments with landlords willing to rent to them. Since long lines of families with vouchers are seeking to rent anything available to them before their voucher expires, landlords can easily find tenants to rent marginal quality apartments in areas with high crime and poor schools. Eventually this free market dysfunction leads to the “ghettoization” of voucher holders, which results in negative consequences to the families and to the surrounding neighborhoods. This is a severe problem in Sunnyside today.75

In recent years, local officials have called for more subsidized housing in Sunnyside, further keeping the neighborhood low income and impoverished.

Prior to 2012, Sunnyside census tracts had a high number of both Housing Choice Vouchers and Low Income Housing Tax Credit properties, as well as one public housing development. As shown in the map, the neighborhood had vastly disproportionate share of subsidized housing in contrast to its neighbors to the east and northwest.

In 2013, the Houston Housing Authority proposed to use 4% Low Income Housing

75 For an expose on the effect of these practices in Houston see “The divide: Barriers to a better home”, Monica Rohr, Houston Chronicle, November 8, 2015.
Tax Credits and Disaster Recovery funds to construct three additional subsidized housing projects in Sunnyside: Cullen at Bellfort, Wilmington Homes, and Highway 288 at Airport. The 421-unit mixed income project at Cullen and Bellfort was to be part of a mixed use development, possibly including a grocery store along with other commercial development. However, the “mixed income” residential units were exclusively for 60% median family income (MFI) and below.

Twenty percent of the units were for extremely low income households (less than 30% MFI). The first phase was to be the affordable housing with no guarantee that the grocery or other commercial uses would be developed.

Wilmington Homes was a public housing development in Sunnyside that was damaged by Hurricane Ike. The housing authority proposed to replace its 108 units of public housing with 148 affordable housing units, of which 37 units would be Project Based Voucher units and 37 would be public housing. All of the new units would have been subsidized, resulting in the addition of 40 subsidized units to a Census tract with the most subsidized housing in the neighborhood.

The proposed development at Highway 288 and Airport called for 410 multifamily units, 79 single family units, 52 units for chronically homeless households, and a commercial compound. All residential units were to serve
families earning 60% MFI or below 20% of the multifamily and single family units were to be restricted to families earning less than 30% MFI. The commercial retail centers were to be built only after half of the multifamily units were developed and during the construction of the rest of the multifamily and homeless housing. The proposed area was over 99 percent minority and the average household was earning between 30% and 50% MFI. Over 24 percent of residents in the area were below the poverty level. For this and other reasons, Texas General Land Office denied HHA’s application for CDBG-DR funds for these projects, and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs denied HHA low income housing tax credits for the Wilmington project.

While mixed income and mixed-use development could be a good fit for Sunnyside, recently proposed ideas of “mixed income” need a reality check. A neighborhood cannot be revitalized by concentrating more poverty in one area. Again, affordable rental housing development generally does not lower property values or produce other negative outcomes unless, as is the case in Sunnyside, the number of the subsidized units overwhelms the non-subsidized housing stock.

**CODE ENFORCEMENT**

Unsafe housing is a significant concern for Sunnyside residents. Much of the housing stock dates to the 1950s, and many properties have become hazardous due to absentee landlords, inadequate code enforcement and insufficient housing repair programs for low-income homeowners. Code violations from Sunnyside in 2015 alone reported 219 instances of dangerous buildings and 194 instances of properties failing to meet minimum standards. Sunnyside has some of the largest numbers of, and most severe, code enforcement problems in the city. Severe code violations related to land blight, such as commercial business activity in a residential area, illegal dumping and abandoned buildings, were analyzed between 2010 and 2011. Sunnyside had the 5th highest number of violations of all Super Neighborhoods in 2010, with over 3,200 deed and code violations, the vast majority of which were code violations. Sunnyside also has one of the highest concentration of “dangerous building” code violations, a violation category considered the most severe among those recognized by the city. Over the same time period, Sunnyside did not have a high number of deed restriction violations, either due to the lack of deed restrictions in Sunnyside or lack of knowledge of deed restrictions that exist.

Sunnyside has more structures with severe code violations than almost any other super neighborhood in Houston.
**Code Violations in Sunnyside, 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Violation</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous Building Total</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Building that has been unsecured for over 7 days</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe Floor or Roof</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of Building Not Properly Attached</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfit for Occupancy or Dangerous for Public Health, Safety, or Welfare</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building with 33% damage to supporting structures or 50% damage to nonsupporting members or outside walls</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Vacant Buildings under Common Ownership Situated Near One Another (Even if Secured)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaning Walls of Vertical Structures</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minimum Standards Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>194</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage of Trash, Inoperable Vehicle, Building Materials Etc</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doors and Windows of any Vacant Building secured</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection to sewage discharge into public sanitation system or approved septic system</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational and Safe Electric Circuits and Outlets</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous Hole, Crack, Break, or Loose Material</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuisance</td>
<td>1,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junked Vehicle</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy Trash</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total violations</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,646</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Houston Building Code Enforcement Violations

Data for Zipcodes 77033 and 77051

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**“Dangerous Building” Code Violations by Super-Neighborhood**

**Legend**
- Major roads
- Significant clusters of violations
  - Hot Spot - 95% Confidence
  - Hot Spot - 90% Confidence
  - Hot Spot - 95% Confidence
  - Super-neighborhoods with no significant concentration

**Age of Housing Stock in Sunnyside**

Source: ACS 2014 5-year estimates
INFRASTRUCTURE

Areas lacking quality infrastructure are less safe and have more trouble attracting private investment. Sunnyside has not received its fair share of infrastructure improvements for decades. We have noted that Sunnyside was developed as a subdivision outside the city limits, lacking drainage, sidewalks, streetlights, etc. When the city annexed Sunnyside, residents expected these services would be provided. They have generally been disappointed.

In theory, infrastructure projects are selected based on need and benefit, which is a function of the number of people in the area served. If projects were distributed equally, the proportion of projects an area receives would be equal to its proportion of residents or land area in the city.

Sunnyside accounts for one percent of the Houston population and one percent of Houston’s land area. However, the neighborhood has had only one drainage project in one subdivision (0.7 percent of all drainage projects) since 2000. Since 1999, Sunnyside has had 14 miles of sidewalk built (3.1% of all sidewalk miles built) and 2.6 miles of street improved (0.5% of all streets improved).

In contrast, a disproportionate amount of infrastructure improvement has taken place in “the arrow,” an affluent, largely white area of Houston with the strongest real estate markets indicated by the most recent Market Value Analysis. The arrow accounts for 23 percent of Houston’s population and 16 percent of its land area, but has received 66 drainage projects (43% of all projects), 127 miles of sidewalk (28%) and 219 miles of street improvements (39%).

This infrastructure inequality is being compounded today. Houston’s most recent capital improvement plan, Rebuild Houston, has no drainage or pavement projects planned for Sunnyside from 2015 to 2020. However, “the arrow” is receiving over a third of all Rebuild Houston projects, despite

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Arrow</th>
<th></th>
<th>Sunnyside</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent of Houston Total</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent of Houston Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>496,871</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21,911</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area (in miles)</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drainage Projects</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sidewalk Projects (in miles)</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Projects (in miles)</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebuild Houston CIP Projects</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rebuild Houston CIP Funding</td>
<td>$471,745,046</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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</table>

Source: City of Houston Public Works Department, 2015
it being home to less than a quarter of Houston's population and less than a fifth of its land area.

**DRAINAGE**

In the map above, FEMA 100-year floodplains are shown, which are areas where there is a 1 percent chance of a flood occurring in any given year. Much of the southernmost portion of Sunnyside along Sims Bayou is in this floodplain. Though the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) recently spent $345 million expanding Sims Bayou, which makes up Sunnyside's southern boundary, there were inadequate investments made in the city drainage system in Sunnyside that conveys water to the bayou, rendering the improvements ineffectual for correcting Sunnyside's drainage issues. Among the inadequate improvements are drainage ditches that are poorly maintained by the city. The map below shows the location and level of service (quality of drainage provided) for each open ditch in Houston, and below that a similar map of Sunnyside. Forty-three percent of these ditches perform inadequately (shown in red), meaning they will fail in any major rain event. Areas in orange comprising 9 percent of all ditches will fail to provide drainage in the average two-year storm event, while areas in yellow (5% of all ditches) will fail in an average five-year event. Large areas on the community are subject to very frequent flooding as a result of the inadequate open ditch drainage system that has served the community for a century. These problems are worsening over time, as densities and impervious cover increase.

The neighborhood relies almost exclusively on open drainage ditches along residential roads, a system which is largely the same one that was built before the area was annexed. Sunnyside's drainage ditches are suitable for a small, rural community rather than suburban area it has grown into today. Moreover, the ditches make installing sidewalks in the neighborhood cost-prohibitive to the city, since in many cases the ditches take up the entire right of way and curb and gutter drainage would need to be installed first.

Among the inadequate improvements are drainage ditches that are poorly maintained by the city. The map below shows the location and level of service (quality of drainage provided) for each open ditch in Houston, and below that a similar map of Sunnyside. Forty-three percent of these ditches perform inadequately (shown in red), meaning they will fail in any major rain event. Areas in orange comprising 9 percent of all ditches will fail to provide drainage in the average two-year storm event, while areas in yellow (5% of all ditches) will fail in an average five-year event. Large areas on the community are subject to very frequent flooding as a result of the inadequate open ditch drainage system that has served the community for a century. These problems are worsening over time, as densities and impervious cover increase.

The open drainage ditch map also shows where storm sewer projects have occurred since 1999. Only one new drainage improvement project has served a portion of Sunnyside since 2000, a deplorable fact that has left many Sunnyside residents frustrated with their city government. In contrast, 43 percent of all drainage projects in the city since 2002 have been located in the largely white, higher income areas, known as the “arrow,” despite the arrow only accounting for 16 percent of the city’s land area and 23 percent of the city’s population.

**SIDEWALKS**

Sidewalks are largely nonexistent in Sunnyside, despite the significant share of the population without cars, the elderly, people with disabilities and school children. These populations walk in the street because no sidewalks are available, often precariously walking or maneuvering wheelchairs in a narrow section of road between deep open drainage ditches and vehicular traffic.

The capital improvements analysis on the next page shows there to be a disproportionate number of sidewalk project miles in block groups with a white majority and within “the arrow” since 1999. Sidewalks are vital in areas where low income households are concentrated, as they are more likely to not own a vehicle and need to walk to a bus stop or their destination safely. The true extent of this sidewalk infrastructure inequality cannot be known because, incredibly, the city does not have a comprehensive database of sidewalk locations and their condition. Additionally, what development regulations do exist that pertain to sidewalks can be overridden by city staff.
VISION, GOALS & STRATEGIES

Vision

Sunnyside will have quality housing that is inclusive, diverse and affordable to persons of all income levels.

Infrastructure will meet residents’ needs and be prioritized in a way to support and encourage public and private partnerships.

Community vision and community led initiatives will direct the redevelopment of Sunnyside.

Local residents, businesses, and political officials will build strong partnerships to gather the resources needed to tackle Sunnyside’s key issues. The city of Houston starts by supporting the citizen-led neighborhood planning effort in providing funding and policy direction to implement the community’s plan.

Goals

1. Adopt and implement Sunnyside’s community master plan
2. Increase and preserve homeownership
3. Improve existing multifamily rental housing, reduce the overconcentration of government-subsidized apartments
4. Provide quality public services
5. Support and enhance community development and economic development

Performance Indicators

• Rate of redevelopment of vacant lots to single family houses
• Number homes and multifamily units rehabbed
• Increase homeownership rate to at least 55 percent by 2030
• Number of substandard houses and vacant lots that become decent, safe and affordable
• Increase in number of residents who can afford their housing
• Community perception surveys
Strategies

Goal 1: Adopt and implement a community master plan

Support Sunnyside’s citizen directed neighborhood planning processes, provide a process for their review and approval by the city and direct city departments to develop implementation plans based on the approved neighborhood-led planning processes.

Instruct city departments to identify, support and coordinate with a world-class community development corporation to work with private foundations and federal agencies to revitalize public infrastructure, secure private capital investments and repair substandard housing in the Sunnyside neighborhoods. The lack of funding for community revitalization has led to the strangulation of the neighborhood based community development movement. In Houston today, the fourth largest city in the US, there are only a handful of active community-led CDCs, most principally focused on producing new housing. Together, these CDCs probably produce on average less than 200 units of housing a year. Yet Houston grows by more than 125 people each day. CDCs, which should be the essential, neighborhood-based, democratic infrastructure for community engagement and revitalization, thus cannot effectively play that critical role. While CDCs have been virtually starved out of existence by the diminishing funding for community development, many CDCs today are also weighed down by a business model based exclusively on the continual building of new subsidized housing. CDCs are essential to fair housing and neighborhood equity. But CDCs are dying. They must have access to the funding to carry out their mission of community development and empowerment and get away from only developing subsidized housing.

Establish a process that engages citizens in dialogue with developers so that when developers seek city funds for projects within their neighborhoods, neighborhood leaders can negotiate appropriate Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) with the developers. Wealthier neighborhoods routinely negotiate on the details of proposed development projects in their areas and gain concessions and agreements from developers. This seldom takes place in Sunnyside because of a lack of an official neighborhood organization to carry on such negotiations but more particularly because elected officials do not back up the civic clubs attempting to get developers to the negotiating table. Even more of a problem is the position of city housing department officials that the neighborhood associations must not “interfere” in the city staff’s agreements with private developers seeking federal funds and TIRZ housing dollars to carry out projects in the neighborhood. Houston city government should accord Sunnyside community leaders the same opportunity as wealthier neighborhoods to negotiate the details on redevelopment initiatives, especially when those initiatives use public funds.
Goal 2: Increase and preserve homeownership

Establish a homeowner and renter stabilization project for elderly and residents with disabilities. Sunnyside is home to several vulnerable populations. Twenty two percent of Sunnyside’s population has a disability as compared to less than 10 percent of Houston’s population. Sunnyside also has a very large cohort of individuals 65 years of age or older who are living alone. Sunnyside also has relatively few people living in group quarters, demonstrating the desire of residents to be independent and continue to live in their own homes. Yet, often elders do not have the means to maintain their homes. A coordinated effort by the city and CDCs should target public, private and voluntary assistance to repair homes or make accessibility improvements for elderly homeowners and homeowners with disabilities to ensure these residents live in decent, safe and sanitary homes.

Undertake a research and public education campaign to raise residents’ awareness to their right to protest their appraisal value. The campaign should also ensure that homeowners understand how to secure all appropriate property tax exemptions.

Establish a Homestead Preservation District. Promote the ability of Sunnyside to increase home ownership, retain affordability and prevent displacement of long-time residents by establishing a district with a city tax set aside for preservation and improvement of affordable housing. Establishing these districts offers a number of tools, including land banks and reinvestment zones to preserve homeownership in disadvantaged neighborhoods and help ease the effects of gentrification.

Consider establishing a community land trust to make homes affordable to existing low income renters who would like to own. Under a community land trust, a nonprofit organization acquires

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Special Populations</th>
<th>Sunnyside</th>
<th>Houston</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population living in Group Quarters</strong></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Over 65 Living Alone</strong></td>
<td>847</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>With A Disability (noninstitutionalized)</strong></td>
<td>4,538</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ACS 2014 5-year estimates
vacant property within the district to use for affordable housing. The land trust retains title to the land, but may sell the homes to low- and moderate-income families. This arrangement allows families to own their homes, without taking on the cost of the land. Not only does the land trust make the homeownership upfront, by reducing or eliminating property taxes, it insulates low-income people against speculative increases in land values, encouraging stability and housing affordability within the community.

Establish a self-help, owner-builder housing initiative to allow people to build new homes and to support the acquisition and rehabilitation of existing homes.

Support community-based real estate services to make buying and selling homes and other real estate easier in Sunnyside.

Negotiate community reinvestment agreement with Houston banks to facilitate home repair and home purchase loans in Sunnyside.

Goal 3: Improve single and multifamily rental housing

Enact a Doors and Windows Ordinance. Ensuring that property owners properly secure vacant buildings is essential to reducing crime and improving safety for surrounding neighbors. The city should fine landlords of multiple properties if a property on a low vacancy block had an opening that was not covered by a functional door or window $300 per day per opening.

Expand Prohibited Purchasers at Tax Sales to code violators. Prohibit prior code violators from purchasing property at tax sales. Within 15 days after issuing a citation for a code violation, a municipality prohibits the transfer of property at a tax sale to a purchaser who has code violations on other properties owned.

Provide assistance for housing rehabilitation. Through a CDC or nonprofit, Sunnyside residents conduct block-by-block assessment to identify blocks where a package of programs can bring about revitalization by coordinating city and volunteer programs to rehabilitate very low income homeowners’ homes, to help low-income renters buy low priced homes, and that rehabilitates safe clean rental property

LARA Lots and Community Land Trusts

Empty lots are pervasive in Sunnyside. These contribute to the impression of neglect that keeps many middle income residents from choosing the neighborhood. These lots may also contribute to the high crime rate as there are many spaces that are not being monitored. Redeveloping these vacant lots is a primary goal of Sunnyside. The Land Assemblage Redevelopment Authority (LARA) in Houston operates in select zones of the City to acquire vacant properties and transition them to higher uses. If someone lives adjacent to a LARA owned lot they may acquire it if:

(1) Your property is touching boundary lines with the LARA lot.
(2) You have lived in your homestead for the past three (3) years.
(3) You do not owe delinquent taxes.

Lots are also provided for the purpose of community gardens through five year leases. Home builders can also purchase the lot if they have completed at least ten homes and owe no taxes to the City. LARA currently has 61 lots for sale in Sunnyside.

Since LARA does not require affordability beyond the first sale, a CDC, land trust or other interested nonprofit could redevelop lots and attach deed-restricted affordability to the property in order to create and maintain affordable homeownership opportunities in the long-term. If the land holding entity is tax exempt, homeowners in CLT homes could see a significant reduction in property taxes.
affordable to low-income people without vouchers.

Reduce substandard housing in Sunnyside to less than twice the citywide rate by 2030 through an effective housing repair, code enforcement and dangerous building demolition program. Part of reaching this goal will require streamlining and accelerating the code enforcement and demolition process, which, based on the flowchart on this page, is highly time consuming and complicated.

Form a partnership with and build capacity of area CDCs to systematically investigate vacant properties and citizens complaints, enhancing the reaction to citizen complaints, the management of vacant properties as well as increased demolitions. The CDCs should carry out the following activities:

- Follow up on all properties referred to the Department of Neighborhoods to determine their status in the code enforcement process.
- Encourage homeowners to voluntarily initiate repairs and provide assistance and/or information regarding available programs/resources to correct code violations.
- Maintain a list of vacant houses and track changes in ownership, foreclosure proceedings and other transfers.

Address the substandard conditions in some multifamily housing developments through a coordinated plan of code enforcement, selective demolition and support for new mixed income housing opportunities in higher opportunity areas in other neighborhoods. Establish a goal to correct substandard living environments in existing private subsidized housing developments by 2025.

A majority of the HUD-subsidized multifamily developments in Houston have reached the end of their current contracts with HUD. Sunnyside neighborhood leaders, in cooperation with HUD and the city’s housing department should develop an assessment of the current conditions on subsidized apartment developments in the community and determine the appropriate future for these developments.

Some properties should be rehabilitated and converted to mixed income housing, while others should be demolished and the units relocated. The goal should be to retain the subsidized housing within the city as a whole and to provide better living conditions for the existing residents while ensuring that no one is involuntarily displaced. In no case should a tenant be involuntarily displaced from the community but they should have choices of where they wish to live. One strategy that should be considered is offering tenants in existing developments the right to stay in the existing, rehabilitated development and the right to choose to move to an apartment in a community of their choice through use of a housing choice voucher. Subsidized apartments that are rehabilitated should provide mixed income housing opportunities to end the segregation of Section 8 families in apartment developments that contain only other very low-income families.

Attract middle income renters to Sunnyside to increase economic diversity while not displacing existing low income residents. All new multifamily rental housing should be required to be economically
integrated. No additional all-Section 8 developments should be constructed. As noted earlier, more than 95 percent (1,541 of 1,617) of all units in the low income housing tax credit properties are set aside exclusively to be occupied by low income families. Within the apartment developments funded under the project based Section 8 voucher program, 100 percent of the apartments are set aside exclusively for extremely low income families. Universally accepted best practices in public and subsidized housing development today requires that apartment developments be created and operated as “mixed income” developments. This means that public policy today requires developments typically be operated so that no more than one third of the tenants are extremely low income households.

Expand the opportunity of Houston Housing Authority’s Section 8 housing choice voucher holders to use their housing vouchers to use their housing vouchers throughout the city and reduce segregation in high poverty neighborhoods. Ensure that housing opportunities for lower income renters are provided in high-quality neighborhoods across the region by requiring that future additional low income housing developments are not disproportionately concentrated in historically low income neighborhoods like Sunnyside, as is currently the case in Houston.\textsuperscript{77} Providing voucher holders with assistance in finding apartments will improve low income families’ mobility options.

Provide opportunities for renters to purchase their home if abandoned by landlords. Residential Title Claims give longtime residents the opportunity to take ownership of their rental homes when the record owners have died with no will or have abandoned the property. Without property titled in their names, residents may be cut off from property insurance, grants or loans for home repair, utility discounts, etc. Residents would file a lawsuit to quiet title. Local taxing authorities may exempt from real property taxes, the assessed valuation of improvements to deteriorated properties in designated neighborhoods. This exemption allows for a graduated 10-year abatement or the ability the devise an abatement schedule over 10 years.

Develop a citywide plan to provide affordable housing opportunities for persons returning to the community from the criminal justice system. The plan should provide housing options that are designed to encourage lower recidivism by not forcing people into a few low opportunity housing choices.

**Goal 4: Provide quality public services**

**Place full inventories and condition assessments of all public infrastructure** (drainage, streets, sidewalks, streetlights, community facilities, etc.) on a citizen friendly online GIS server accessible on the web, since the city’s current system is incomplete.

**Reform Rebuild Houston** to improve accountability and equity in infrastructure spending for low income neighborhoods of color like Sunnyside. The current ways that Houston decides which neighborhoods receive capital improvements such as paved roads, new sewer, water, and stormwater lines and sidewalks put Sunnyside at a disadvantage. The city prioritizes these improvements by the number of people benefitted by the project. Therefore, more densely populated areas of the city or neighborhoods that are not plagued by vacant lots are prioritized before Sunnyside. Capital improvement projects should be prioritized by need, namely existing level of service and where new private investment is needed the most. The city continues to overlook the fact that Sunnyside has infrastructure fit for a rural area, leaving Sunnyside as the last place new businesses and jobs want to locate.

**Complete the network of sidewalks within Sunnyside** to provide safety for the large percentage of residents (including many elderly and disabled persons) who lack private transportation. Direct city staff to develop a comprehensive infrastructure inventory and use the results to prioritize funding by need. It is difficult to decide what you need to fix if you do not know about all of the things needing fixing. Prioritize sidewalk inventory: 1) Assess the location of existing sidewalks and conditions of each sidewalk segment; 2) Assess missing segments in the sidewalk network; 3) Update street condition inventory and drainage study on a yearly basis; and 4) Create inventory of streetlight placement and condition.

**Provide a modern, properly engineered stormwater drainage system** to replace the deep, dangerous and often inadequate system of open ditch drainage.

**Goal 5: Support and enhance community development and economic development activity**

**Sponsor a national conference in Sunnyside** bringing together community development corporations to showcase best practices for turning around distressed neighborhoods. This would be in conjunction with an initiative to support effective CDCs in Houston.

**Convene a summit on community change, gentrification and economic diversity strategies** for achieving healthy neighborhoods through residential diversity.

**Inventory, license and monitor hazardous incompatible land uses** in neighborhoods by 2016.

**Reform the city’s Section 3 jobs program** so that it produces real jobs for people with lower incomes.

**Conduct a comprehensive survey of city historical sites and buildings** of significance to communities of color and work to provide security, protection and recognition for them.

**Develop a master planned site on large city-owned land parcels.** The scars of past municipal injustices are still visible in Sunnyside. One such scar is the former Reed Road landfill that lies undeveloped and overgrown in the middle of Sunnyside. Instead of chain link and barbed wire fencing, a phased master plan should be made to clean up and redevelop this parcel. The first phase should make the area less of an eyesore and more of a focal point for recreational activity and community events. This phase of the plan should establish a volume of activity that would be deemed successful and forge the links to realize that level of success, for example by linking to an active lifestyle program that would assure regular use of a hike and bike trail. Achievement of housing goals in this plan should trigger later phases of the master plan, which add with badly-needed amenities such as destination retail, a full-service grocery store, and an emergency
medical facility. This could be incentivized using existing tax incentives, 380 agreements, and the new Sunnyside TIRZ.

**Encourage community-serving economic development opportunities.** There are a myriad of businesses and facilities needed in Sunnyside that are not being provided outright by the free market. The Economic Development Department needs to provide incentives for services such as medical and minor emergency facilities and grocery stores. This could be achieved by offering resources for small business development, instituting policies that encourage public private partnerships, or working with management districts to provide incentives for community-serving uses.

**Support and encourage social entrepreneurship in Sunnyside.** Supporting social entrepreneurship means supporting innovative ideas based on business techniques, but rather than the goal solely being profit, social entrepreneurs work to create positive outcomes in society. Some innovative Sunnyside residents have begun working on projects that address neighborhood beautification, school boosters, housing rehabilitation, after school programs, internships, and small business finance. Financial support from other public and nonprofit agencies will help these projects reach a broader audience and help the community help itself.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Associated Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Establish a process enabling citizens to engage in dialogue with developers at the time developers seek city funds for projects within their neighborhoods to negotiate appropriate Community Benefit Agreements.</td>
<td>Mayor and City Council, P&amp;DR, HCDD, Dept. of Neighborhoods</td>
<td>Goal 1: Adopt and implement a community master plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Undertake a research and public education campaign</td>
<td>HCDD, HCAD</td>
<td>Goal 2: Increase and preserve homeownership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Establish a self-help, owner-builder housing initiative</td>
<td>HCDD</td>
<td>Goal 2: Increase and preserve homeownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Support community-based real estate services</td>
<td>Private sector with some subsidy from HCDD</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Enact a Doors &amp; Window Ordinance</td>
<td>Mayor and City Council</td>
<td>Goal 3: Improve single- and multifamily rental housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Provide assistance for housing rehabilitation.</td>
<td>HCDD, nonprofit organizations, community development corporations</td>
<td>Goal 3: Improve single- and multifamily rental housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Address the substandard conditions in some multifamily housing developments</td>
<td>Dept. of Neighborhoods, Code Enforcement Division, HCDD</td>
<td>Goal 3: Improve single- and multifamily rental housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Convene a summit on community change, gentrification and economic diversity strategies</td>
<td>At-risk neighborhoods, University planning departments, Community development corporations</td>
<td>Goal 5: Support and enhance community development and economic development activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Inventory, license and monitor hazardous incompatible land uses</td>
<td>Planning and Development Review</td>
<td>Goal 5: Support and enhance community development and economic development activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Conduct a comprehensive survey of city historical sites and buildings of significance</td>
<td>Planning and Development Review</td>
<td>Goal 5: Support and enhance community development and economic development activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short-term/long-term</td>
<td>Support, review, approve and implement citizen directed neighborhood planning processes</td>
<td>Mayor and City Council, various departments</td>
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<tr>
<td>short-term/long-term</td>
<td>Place full inventories and condition assessments of all public infrastructure, maintained on a regular basis</td>
<td>Public Works and Engineering Dept., GIS Dept.</td>
<td>Goal 4: Provide quality public services</td>
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<td>Stage</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Associated Goal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Identify, support and coordinate with a world-class community development corporation to work with private foundations and federal agencies to revitalize public infrastructure, secure private capital investments and revitalize substandard housing</td>
<td>Mayor and City Council, HCDD, Public Works Dept., community development corporations</td>
<td>Goal 1: Adopt and implement a community master plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish a homeowner and renter stabilization project for elderly and residents with disabilities.</td>
<td>HCDD</td>
<td>Goal 2: Increase and preserve homeownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish a Homestead Preservation District.</td>
<td>Mayor and City Council, HCDD</td>
<td>Goal 2: Increase and preserve homeownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consider establishing a community land trust to keep homes affordable to existing residents.</td>
<td>Mayor and City Council, HCDD</td>
<td>Goal 2: Increase and preserve homeownership</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiate community reinvestment agreement with Houston banks</td>
<td>Mayor and City Council, HCDD</td>
<td>Goal 2: Increase and preserve homeownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expand Prohibited Purchasers at Tax Sales to code violators</td>
<td>Mayor and city council, state legislature</td>
<td>Goal 3: Improve single- and multifamily rental housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reduce substandard housing in target areas to less than twice the citywide rate by 2030</td>
<td>HCDD, Dept. of Neighborhoods, Code Enforcement Division</td>
<td>Goal 3: Improve single- and multifamily rental housing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form a partnership with and build capacity of area CDCs</td>
<td>Dept. of Neighborhoods, HCDD</td>
<td>Goal 3: Improve single- and multifamily rental housing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attract middle income renters to Sunnyside</td>
<td>HCDD, Houston Housing Authority, Economic Development Dept.</td>
<td>Goal 3: Improve single- and multifamily rental housing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expand the opportunity of Houston Housing Authority’s Section 8 housing choice voucher holders</td>
<td>Houston Housing Authority</td>
<td>Goal 3: Improve single- and multifamily rental housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide opportunities to renters to purchase their home if abandoned by landlords</td>
<td>HCDD, DON Code Enforcement Division, Mayor and City Council</td>
<td>Goal 3: Improve single- and multifamily rental housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Associated Goal</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>Develop a citywide plan to provide affordable housing opportunities for persons returning to the community from the criminal justice system</td>
<td>Mayor and City Council, HCDD, Houston Housing Authority</td>
<td>Goal 3: Improve single- and multifamily rental housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reform Rebuild Houston</td>
<td>Public Works and Engineering Dept.</td>
<td>Goal 4: Provide quality public services</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete the network of sidewalks within the community</td>
<td>Mayor and City Council, Public Works and Engineering</td>
<td>Goal 4: Provide quality public services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide a modern, properly engineered stormwater drainage system</td>
<td>Mayor and City Council, Public Works and Engineering</td>
<td>Goal 4: Provide quality public services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reform the city’s Section 3 jobs program</td>
<td>Economic Development Department</td>
<td>Goal 5: Support and enhance community development and economic development activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a master planned site on large city-owned land parcels</td>
<td>Planning and Development Review; Economic Development Dept.</td>
<td>Goal 5: Support and enhance community development and economic development activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage community-serving economic development opportunities</td>
<td>Economic Development Department</td>
<td>Goal 5: Support and enhance community development and economic development activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support and encourage social entrepreneurship in Sunnyside</td>
<td>Economic Development, HCDD, Parks and Recreation Dept.</td>
<td>Goal 5: Support and enhance community development and economic development activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementation Strategy

**Implementation Process**

- **Organize**
  - Create subcommittees
  - Share plan goals
  - Get more residents involved

- **Prioritize**
  - Rank and choose strategies
  - Delegate action items

- **Collaborate**
  - Book meetings with decision makers
  - Collect survey information

- **Act**
  - Demand improvements
  - Use media strategically

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Subcommittee meetings
There is no neighborhood in the city of Houston which has suffered so much at the hands of Houston city government than Sunnyside, but the pride and determination of Sunnyside residents, coupled with political will, can create the neighborhood current residents and early settlers have wanted since the early 1900s: an affordable, safe place to live with opportunities for their children to live an even better life in the future.

The revitalization of Sunnyside will require the city of Houston’s commitment to undo the wrongs it has inflicted upon the neighborhood since annexation. The principal initiatives must be environmental remediation, the belated and complete provision of adequate public services and facilities, correcting the massive over concentration of economically segregated and racially segregated subsidized rental housing and encouraging the rehabilitation and new construction of owner occupied, mixed-income housing.

The city must carry out remedial activities in a manner that does not trigger the displacement of residents with limited incomes through gentrification. While gentrification is not currently an issue in Sunnyside, the neighborhood's desirable location means that the involuntary displacement of the residence through redevelopment of the community may occur in the future as Houston continues to grow.

### Implementation Strategy

#### Organize the community

Community building and organizing must continue to occur in order for the plan to be successful. With the help of TOP, Sunnyside community members should organize house meetings, dialogues, and community events to get the word out, learn more about how families are affected by the issues present in Sunnyside and delegate actions to bring us closer to accomplishing our goals.

#### Collect additional information

Surveys and focus groups diving deeper into the issues laid out in the plan and provide a baseline to measure improvements. For example, a neighborhood school report card could be created to understand how parents and the community perceive their schools. This survey could be done every year to gauge whether the community is seeing improvements from HISD.

#### Create an inventory of existing resources and potential partners in Sunnyside, Houston, Texas, and the nation

We can help Sunnyside residents now by dispersing information about existing programs and resources related to home repair, property tax relief, health insurance, and daycare.

#### Create a list of potential funding and grants available for specific projects

We can build the capacity of those doing great work in Sunnyside by providing them with opportunities to get more funding.

### Host panel discussions, seminars, and training sessions to learn more about specific processes, tools, and strategies the community wants to pursue

Community members, with the support of TxLIHIS, can offer seminars to the rest of Sunnyside on important topics related to the change they want to see in their community, such as fair housing principles, affordable housing, CDC partnerships, and floodplain designation. Panel discussion could also be set up with potential future partners.

### Key Action Steps to Success

To begin tackling the strategies outlined above, Sunnyside residents should consider working on the following, with help as needed by Texas Low Income Housing Information Service and TOP:

- Identify all important contacts that need to be involved in this issue and delegate roles to move the agenda forward. This may include students, parents, alumni, principals, and HISD administration and officials.
- Develop focus groups and surveys to know what people need.
- Have conversations with key administrators early and often to craft realistic policies that will be effective.