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Rice Management Company (RMC) is currently leading the development of The Ion and The Ion District, a transformational mixed-use project that seeks to strengthen Houston's economic resiliency and build a community that offers opportunities to all Houstonians. In November of 2020, RMC invited a group of community stakeholders to assist RMC in identifying a set of commitments that can be documented in a signed community benefits agreement (CBA) with the City of Houston. The group of thirteen stakeholders are known as the “CBA Working Group” (or “The Working Group”) and represents respected community, business, and civic leaders who can provide both a citywide and local neighborhood perspective.

The CBA Working Group came together following a three-part community workshop series hosted by RMC and the City of Houston in September-October of 2020 to share the vision of The Ion District and provide for a public discussion of project opportunities and potential impacts. Led and facilitated by Sam Dike, Manager of Strategic Initiatives at RMC, the group engaged in a six-part process that was data-driven and intentional. The Working Group concentrated its efforts around three focus areas for the CBA: Economic Opportunity, Housing Affordability, and Inclusive Hiring & Contracting. The goals outlined below helped guide The Working Group in its development of commitments and ultimate recommendations.

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After five months of engaging conversation and deliberation, The Working Group has developed a set of recommendations for RMC and the City. These recommendations reflect commitments that The Working Group feels could result in the largest positive impact on the community. The Working Group also came to consensus on the accountability structure for the CBA. The Working Group recommends that RMC produce and publish a “Community Investment Report” publicly each year to track ongoing metrics, as well as establish a “Community Accountability Committee” to review the annual Community Investment Report and provide recommendations to the City for continuous improvement and outcomes regarding RMC’s commitment.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
COMMITMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic Opportunities:

A. **Workforce Training and Development Programs:** Provide financial contribution to free or low-cost upskilling and training programs with strong track records for job placement for tech-enabled jobs with a focus on training and placing underrepresented populations.

B. **Inclusive Tech Entrepreneurship Accelerator Program:** Provide financial contribution and/or administrative services to a business accelerator focused on supporting the growth of local, minority-owned tech-focused and tech-enabled start-ups.

C. **Inclusive Tech Entrepreneurship Investment Fund:** Invest in a venture fund established with the specific purpose of providing initial start-up capital for tech-enabled firms led by minority entrepreneurs from the Houston region.

D. **Small Business Leased Space Opportunities:** Commit to leasing at least three ground-floor retail spaces within The Ion District to minority-owned Houston-based retail or restaurant businesses.

E. **Innovation-Focused Programming:** Host, collaborate or fund community-focused events or programs to increase community access for residents, businesses, and entrepreneurs to The Ion through the introduction of technology, career opportunity exposure, and business development support.

Housing Affordability:

F. **Affordable Housing Fund:** Contribute to an affordable housing low-interest lending fund that provides low-cost financing to Community Development Corporations, small private developers and other parties for the preservation or creation of affordable housing in Midtown, the Third Ward and communities adjacent to The Ion District.

G. **Supportive Housing Grant:** Provide grant(s) to organizations developing supportive housing within the Third Ward or Midtown to serve hard-to-house or unhoused populations.

H. **Housing Counseling & Eviction Protection Program:** Provide grant(s) to organizations working on providing support services for at-risk renters and homeowners within Midtown, the Third Ward and communities adjacent to The Ion District.

I. **Outreach Services for Homeless Populations:** Contract with an organization providing services to homeless populations in the vicinity of The Ion District.

Inclusive Hiring & Contracting:

J. **MWBE Subcontractor(s) for Horizontal Development:** Lead efforts to contract with MWBE businesses for the construction of the District Garage and public infrastructure to achieve MWBE participation targets.

K. **MWBE Subcontractor(s) to Vertical Developer:** Proactively engage third-party developers to implement programmatic steps to achieve MWBE participation targets for design and construction.

L. **MWBE Investment Opportunities:** Commit to include opportunities for minority capital co-investment in any vertical development projects in which the Principal Developer invests, as well as hire a minority-owned firm to source potential investors and advise RMC.

M. **Technical Assistance & Supports for Local Hiring & Subcontracting:** Utilize, develop or leverage existing programs to address areas of limited capacity for MWBE firms and local hiring needs for residents, in construction, building operations, and property maintenance by focusing on education, financial tools, and mentor-protégé opportunities with developers and contractors.

N. **Outreach:** Employ several outreach strategies to market subcontracting opportunities for construction, operations, and maintenance within The Ion District, including hosting outreach events, providing information on an easily accessible project website, and engaging with trade groups.

O. **Monitoring:** Establish ongoing monitoring and communication protocols beyond the initial subcontracting level.

P. **Inclusive Hiring:** Commit to offering workforce programs and or initiatives to promote the local hiring of residents, in construction, building operations, and property maintenance during The Ion District’s development.
Rice Management Company (RMC) is currently leading the development of The Ion and The Ion District, a transformational mixed-use project that seeks to strengthen Houston’s economic resiliency and build a community that offers opportunities to all Houstonians. As part of this vision, RMC is committed to ensuring that the development of The Ion District benefits its neighbors by fostering an inclusive, welcoming neighborhood and creating economic opportunities in an equitable manner.

In November of 2020, RMC invited a group of community stakeholders to assist RMC in identifying a set of commitments that can be documented in a signed community benefits agreement (CBA) with the City of Houston. The group of thirteen stakeholders are known as the “CBA Working Group” (or “The Working Group”) and is composed of representatives from neighborhoods adjacent to The Ion District as well as interested business and civic leaders.

This document serves to provide a summary of the CBA working group process over the course of the last five months and detail recommendations by The Working Group to RMC regarding the commitments to be documented in a signed Community Benefits Agreement with the City.

The Working Group expresses deep appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the CBA working group. The entire process was led with great care and thoughtfulness that demonstrated RMC’s genuine dedication and passion to driving inclusive solutions to benefit Midtown, the Third Ward, and Houston as a whole. The work we undertook was data-driven and intentional, as hopefully evident in the set of recommendations detailed in this report. We believe that the commitments RMC makes will have a tremendous potential to be transformative for people, businesses, and communities locally and citywide.

GOALS & KEY FOCUS AREAS

The CBA Working Group was charged with helping RMC shape the content of commitments to be documented in a signed Community Benefits Agreement that seeks to address real community needs through both direct action and investment, and through partnerships with community-based organizations. The Working Group concentrated its efforts around three focus areas for the CBA: Economic Opportunity, Housing Affordability, and Inclusive Hiring & Contracting. The goals outlined below helped guide The Working Group in its development of commitments and ultimate recommendations.

Focus Areas & Goals:

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Prior to the formation of the CBA Working Group, RMC conducted a community engagement listening tour in 2019 and has since had dozens of one-on-one and small group meetings to understand the local landscape. RMC also hosted a three-part community workshop series in the fall of 2020, detailed below, which fed into the CBA Working Group.
RMC and the City of Houston hosted a three-part community workshop series in September-October of 2020 to share the vision of The Ion District and provide for a public discussion of project opportunities and potential impacts. The workshops focused on three core topics: 1) Economic Opportunities through Job-Training and Entrepreneurship, 2) Preserving and Expanding Housing Affordability, and 3) Hiring and Contracting Opportunities in The Ion District. Each workshop involved presentations and panel discussion from expert speakers, as well as break out discussion groups where the community can engage in public dialogue.

The Economic Opportunities Workshop held on September 29th, 2020 featured presentations from DivInc, Per Scholas, and TXRX Labs, as well as a panel with Warren Broadnax (CEO & Founder of She’s Happy Foundation), Gordon Taylor (Co-founder & CEO of Guza), Sheroo Mukhtiar (Executive Director of SER Houston), and Archie Blanson (Interim President of Lone Star College-North Harris). Moderated by Landi Spearman, the panel discussed key challenges for aspiring entrepreneurs and job seekers, particularly access to capital and education. During the community breakout sessions, workshop participants raised the importance of centering diversity and inclusion within tech and innovation and ensuring that programs at The Ion serve a wide range of individuals and small businesses.

The Housing Affordability Workshop held on October 6th, 2020 featured presentations from Rice University’s Kinder Institute, Self-Help Credit Union on Durham’s Affordable Housing loan Fund, as well as a panel with Assata Richards (Founding Director of Sankofa Research Institute), Mary Lawler (Executive Director of Avenue), and two eventual CBA working group members, Rudy Rasmus (Pastor & Founder of St. John’s Church) and Jason Hyman (Owner of Realinc). Moderated by Laurie Vignaud, the panel discussed ways to create and preserve affordable housing, such as through a housing trust fund, or community land trust. The panel also discussed ways RMC can partner with minority developers or equity investors, provide ancillary services such as housing counseling, and utilize its influence to advocate for greater policies to protect homeowners and renters. In the community breakout sessions, workshop participants echoed these sentiments and stressed the importance of protecting people from being forced out of the neighborhood.

The last workshop on Hiring & Contracting Opportunities was held on October 8th, 2020 and featured presentations from Washington University in St. Louis and the City of Houston’s Office of Business Opportunity. The panel included two eventual CBA working group members, Carol Guess and Paula Mendoza, as well as Tony Council (President of TLC Engineering), and Abdul Haleem Muhammad (Minister and Founder of NTE Planning Consultants). Moderated by Angelique Bartholomew, the panel discussed major challenges MWBE subcontractors often face, such as limited capacity and delayed payments, and suggested mechanisms for mentorship and capacity building, such as joint ventures. In the community breakout sessions, participants highlighted the difficulties Black and formerly incarcerated individuals have in accessing contracting opportunities and expressed a desire for greater access to resources, networking opportunities, and business support services from The Ion and The Ion District.

RMC has maintained a public engagement website that documents RMC’s activities to date. For more details on the public community workshops, please see the appendix or find links on the website to the workshops, presentation materials and a place for the public to share ideas.
CBA Working Group Participants:

The CBA Working Group is composed of thirteen representatives from Midtown, the Third Ward, and neighborhoods adjacent to The Ion District that includes a broad representation of respected community, business, and civic leaders representing their community affiliations and organizations, who have also drawn on and engaged with their networks during the drafting process and provided RMC with both a citywide and local Midtown and Third Ward perspective.

- Errol Allen II, Alpha Merit Group Educational Foundation (AMGEF) and Houston Black Leadership Institute (HBLI)
- Paul D. Charles, Neighborhood Recovery Community Development Corporation
- Carol Guess, Greater Houston Black Chamber
- Jason Hyman, Realinc, Office of Jason T, Hyman
- Paula Mendoza, Possible Missions / Houston Minority Supplier Diversity Council Board Member
- Dr. Laura Murillo, Houston Hispanic Chamber
- Mike Pittman, UpCDC / East End Makers Hub
- Dr. Rudy Rasmus, St. John’s UMC / Temenos / Bread of Life
- Helen Stagg, Change Happens
- Laurie Vignaud, Unity National Bank
- Jay Vinekar, Midtown Super Neighborhood #62
- Lindsey Williams, City of Houston
- Susan Young, South Main Alliance

The Working Group is led and facilitated by Sam Dike, Manager of Strategic Initiatives at RMC. Other RMC and Ion team members were also engaged in the process, including Christine Galib, Bryson Grover, Deanea LeFlore, Ryan LeVasseur, Cindy Melton, and Jan Odegard. The Working Group also received support from HR&A Advisors, MPact Consulting, and One World Strategy Group.
The Working Group commenced meeting in early December and has engaged in a six-part process to ensure that commitments are well thought out and serve to benefit the community. The Working Group met six times as an entire working group and twice as sub-groups to discuss commitment concepts and ideas for particular focus areas over the course of five months. The Working Group commends the RMC team for leading a smooth working group process — even through a historic winter storm. Each meeting was thoughtful, engaging and resulted in tangible and productive outcomes.

**MEETINGS**

1. **Introductions**

2. **Goals & Focus Areas**
   - a. Overview of current Ion programming
   - b. Discuss three key focus areas and goals

3. **Subgroup Process**
   - a. Review key focus areas and goals
   - b. Discuss subgroup process
   - Subgroup Workshop – Commitments Brainstorm
     - c. Discuss program Concepts and commitment ideas

4. **Subgroup Report-Out**
   - a. Subgroups report back on commitments brainstorm workshop
   - b. Discuss strengths and weaknesses of each commitment
   - c. Create a shortlist for subsequent deep dive
   - Subgroup Workshop – Commitments Deep Dive
     - d. Discuss potential partners, metrics, timing, challenges, and other roll-out considerations

5. **Commitments Prioritization**
   - a. Subgroups report back on commitments deep dive workshop
   - b. Discuss program and commitments criteria
   - c. Create a prioritized list of commitments

6. **Consensus & Accountability Structure**
   - a. Achieve consensus on commitment terms and recommendations
   - b. Discuss potential processes and structures for accountability and compliance

As a part of the process, The Working Group worked collaboratively to fill out a “commitment template” for each commitment idea to document specifically: the commitment’s overarching goal, target users, purpose, role for RMC, potential partners, program metrics, challenges, timing, roll-out considerations, and successful precedents. The result of this work is detailed in the following commitments and recommendations.
After five months of engaging conversation and deliberation, The Working Group has developed a set of recommendations for RMC. These recommendations reflect commitments that The Working Group feels could result in the largest positive impact on the community. The Working Group considered how the commitments align with the Third Ward’s 2019 Complete Communities Action Plan. The Working Group has also included additional recommendations to the City of Houston regarding affordable housing programs and policies and MWBE contractor bonding support.
Workforce Training and Development Programs

Houston's tech workforce has historically not reflected the city's diversity — Black and Latinx workers make up 12% and 18% of the tech ecosystem respectively, despite representing 15% and 32% of the overall Houston workforce.\(^1\) Facilitating the growth of the tech industry offers an opportunity to provide greater economic opportunities for underrepresented job seekers and diversify the region's economy, which is highly dependent on the energy sector. Specialized workforce development programs can facilitate employment and economic mobility for residents of communities surrounding The Ion District by providing technical training for workers and job seekers at all stages of the tech career ladder. This commitment also aligns with the Third Ward’s Complete Communities goals to expand local employment opportunities by attracting a job training facility.\(^11\) Throughout the working group process, The Working Group placed special emphasis on who the program would serve. The Working Group also noted that it was critical that the program focuses on facilitating the placement of individuals in internships, apprenticeships, and jobs. For additional context, The Working Group looked at successful precedents such as Per Scholas, Year Up, and the Houston Area Urban League Tech Program, among others. Per Scholas, for example, has provided tuition-free training to over 11,000 job seekers across the U.S. — 87% of whom are people of color. It has developed a custom curriculum based on market and industry demand and has a job placement rate of 80% for graduates.\(^11\)

The Working Group recommends that RMC provide funding to workforce development programs with a high track record for job placement, targeting particularly underrepresented job seekers (such as Black, Latinx, and women), low-income populations, opportunity youth aged between 16-24, and formerly incarcerated individuals. This funding commitment should cover 3-5 years of start-up operating costs for the program provider, with the aim that the program will become financially sustainable beyond the initial funding period. In terms of metrics, RMC should monitor the number of students trained per year, number of job placements, and the average wage of placed individuals broken out by race, gender, and other demographic indicators.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to providing or causing to be provided a financial contribution in grants and/or in-kind donations to free or low-cost upskilling and training programs within the technology sector, and including tech-enabled industries. The programs should have a focus and strong track record for training and placing underrepresented populations in tech-enabled jobs. Funding sufficient enough to support program execution aligned with the goals of the commitment for three to five years will likely require a minimum of $1,000,000.
Inclusive Tech Entrepreneurship Accelerator Program

Though Houston is consistently ranked among the top cities in the country for minority entrepreneurs, its tech startup ecosystem does not yet reflect that diversity. A 2019 study by Volusion found that while minorities account for 63% of the population, only 35% of startups in Houston are minority-owned.

There are currently few accelerator programs in Houston dedicated to serving underrepresented populations, particularly Black and Latinx entrepreneurs in technology and innovation. An investment in an inclusive tech entrepreneurship program would address a critical need. This also aligns with the Third Ward’s Complete Communities goal to grow the local economy by seeding new community-owned businesses and sparking entrepreneurship. The Working Group considered DivInc and 40 Capital as precedent case studies. DivInc’s Startup Accelerator program, for example, has helped 73 underrepresented founders launch companies by providing them access to education, mentorship, networks, and financial capital resources.

The Working Group recommends that RMC provide funding to support tech startup accelerator(s) focused on underrepresented Black, Latinx, and women founders for a period of 3 years with the aim of the program becoming financially sustainable beyond the initial funding period. RMC should monitor the number of minority and women-owned startups created, incubated, or expanded, and the percentage increase of minority and women-owned tech startups.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to providing or causing to be provided grants, administrative services, or in-kind donations to “business accelerator(s)” focused on supporting the growth of local tech-focused minority owned start-ups. Funding sufficient enough to support program execution aligned with the goals of the commitment for three years will likely require a minimum of $500,000.

Inclusive Tech Entrepreneurship Investment Fund

As mentioned above, Houston’s tech startup ecosystem has yet to reflect the diversity of the City. There is a significant need to expand the opportunities for minority and women-owned startups. Like the prior commitment, this aligns with the Third Ward’s Complete Communities goal to seed new community-owned businesses and grow entrepreneurship.

The Working Group recommends that RMC support a venture fund to increase Black and Latinx entrepreneurs’ access to capital. The Working Group suggests that the fund considers both equity and debt financing. In terms of metrics, RMC should monitor the dollar value of the capital contributed by RMC into the fund, the dollar value of the returns from the fund to RMC, and the number of minority and women-owned startups receiving investment from the fund (as reported by a fund manager).

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to investing in a venture fund administered by a fund manager selected by RMC that establishes a fund with the specific purpose of providing initial start-up capital for minority entrepreneurs in the Houston region. Funding sufficient enough to establish the fund and potentially attract similarly sized investors will likely require an investment of several million dollars.
Small Business Leased Space Opportunities

While The Ion and The Ion District may be focused on tech and tech-enabled businesses, The Working Group recognizes that there is also a need to support the broad array of small, local businesses already in Midtown and the Third Ward. This commitment aligns with the Third Ward’s Complete Communities goals to support small businesses.

The Working Group recommends that RMC designate spaces it controls within The Ion and The Ion District to local minority-owned retailers and small businesses (with a focus on Black and Latino) for a minimum of 7 years. The Working Group is pleased that RMC has already demonstrated this commitment with the leasing of restaurant space to minority-led chefs and restauranteurs Stuff’d, Common Bond, and Late August. RMC should continue to report on the tenancy status of spaces within The Ion District in terms of local ownership and demographics of tenant ownership.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to leasing or causing to have leased at least three ground-floor retail spaces within property it owns in The Ion District to minority-owned Houston-based retail or restaurant businesses.

Innovation-Focused Programming for Residents, Businesses, and Entrepreneurs

RMC should continue its efforts to host regularly scheduled programming and events to lower barriers to entry for all community members, entrepreneurs, and small businesses. These events should aim to increase community access to The Ion through the introduction of technology and career opportunity exposure, such as “Family Tech Night,” which may lead to more involved workforce and upskilling programs as noted above. Moreover, investing in services to support entrepreneurship and small business development in the area can help create generational wealth and support the community in its COVID-19 recovery. This commitment aligns with the Third Ward’s Complete Communities goals to support small businesses, as well as promote civic engagement, education, and economy & jobs. For additional context, The Working Group looked at EEDC’s Small Business Training Incubator, University City District’s Small Business Services in Philadelphia, and the Indiana Small Business Development Center. These training centers and programs provide targeted support to small businesses for their formation, growth, and sustainability.

As part the ongoing initiatives, The Working Group recommends that RMC continue to conduct marketing and outreach in an inclusive manner (with a focus on targeting Third Ward residents and minority-owned businesses) and monitor or survey the number of visitors from the Third Ward to understand receptiveness and effectiveness of its programming. Metrics to track include the reported number of events per month and year, attendance to events and programming by residents and businesses, and the demographics of attendees, as available. Other events may include ted-talks, panel discussions, mixers, job fairs, and other opportunities to support people in their career advancement and business development.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to hosting and/or funding the administration of community-focused events or programming within The Ion to increase community access to The Ion and awareness of programs for workforce development and services supporting the growth of minority-owned and disadvantaged businesses. Example program themes include but are not limited to: diversity and inclusion tenant career fairs, digital upskilling seminars, and technical assistance workshops.
Affordable Housing Fund

Houston faces one of the most severe affordable housing shortages in the nation. Over 430,000 households – nearly half of Houston renters – are housing cost-burdened (allocating 30% or more of household income to rent). These numbers do not account for the tens of thousands of Houstonians that will need support because of the economic impacts of COVID-19, which are expected to exacerbate the housing affordability crisis, particularly for already vulnerable households. Nearly 40% of those earning less than $40,000 annually have lost their jobs compared with just 13% for those earning over $100,000 annually.\textsuperscript{vii}

With a high concentration of poverty close to Downtown and the future innovation district, the Third Ward is at a significant risk for continued displacement and housing insecurity. Historically Houston’s first Black neighborhood, the Third Ward suffered disinvestment through a significant portion of the 1900s prior to the current pressures of gentrification and displacement from ongoing investments in Midtown. Moreover, “Building Housing for All” is a major goal outlined in the Third Ward’s Complete Communities. For context, The Working Group considered national precedents such as Metro Denver’s Impact Facility and the Durham Affordable Housing Loan Fund. In Durham, the Loan Fund offers affordable housing developers 100% loan-to-value loans with below-market rates for up to five years and has a risk-sharing structure that allows investors and borrowers to take smart risks. The Loan Fund is expected to support the creation or preservation of over 1,000 affordable homes over ten years.\textsuperscript{viii}

The Working Group recommends that RMC launch and provide initial capitalization for an affordable housing fund (or existing fund program) to accelerate the construction and preservation of affordable housing in the Third Ward, targeting households earning below 80% AMI. The fund should be flexible to support land and building acquisition, project initiation costs for non-profit developers, and/or construction financing. The fund should also consider the types of housing it creates, including the unit size and mix to allow for mixed-income residents. RMC should look to partner with a Black-led financial institution or local CDFI to serve as the fund manager. The Working Group recommends a funding period of 10 years. RMC should monitor the number of housing units produced (created and preserved), the income range served, affordability period, and types of organizations receiving loans.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to contributing to an affordable housing loan fund that provides low-cost financing to Community Development Corporations, small private developers, and other parties for the preservation or creation of affordable housing in the Third Ward. Funding sufficient enough to establish the fund and potentially attract additional capital will likely require an investment of several million dollars.
**Supportive Housing Grant**

Homelessness in Midtown is a persistent condition caused by multiple gaps in the housing, employment training, mental health, and public safety service delivery system. Supportive housing developments typically face a financing gap that is about a third of the total program budget, which requires philanthropic grants to cover the gap. With that said, there are proven organizations currently serving this population with the need for additional capital to increase their capacity.

The Working Group recommends that RMC partner with and provide one-time funding to organization(s) advancing supportive housing in the adjacent neighborhoods of The Ion District. RMC should look to partner with an existing, reputable organization in the area to serve households earning less than 50% AMI. This aligns with the Third Ward’s Complete Communities goals to “Build Housing for All.” As part of this commitment, RMC should track the number of housing units produced (created and preserved), and income range served as a result of its funding.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to providing grant(s) to organizations developing supportive housing within Midtown or the Third Ward to serve hard-to-house or unhoused populations earning less than 50% AMI. Funding support is designed to be supplemental to existing committed resources and therefore a commitment of between $500,000 and $1,000,000 is recommended.

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**Housing Counseling & Eviction Protection Program**

Due to the economic impacts of COVID-19 and lack of protections for renters in Texas, Houston tenants are expected to face one of the swiftest increases in eviction rates in the country. An unprecedented number of renters could soon lose their place to live, particularly in neighborhoods like the Third Ward, which last year had one of the most eviction cases for a neighborhood within the inner loop (287). Given the accelerated pace of economic precarity there will a rapidly growing need for support programs tailored for households facing eviction and needing other forms of housing counseling. Moreover, housing counseling focused on homeownership can help build generational wealth for residents in the Third Ward. The Working Group considered Harris County’s Eviction Pilot Program as a precedent case study, which is designed to connect struggling tenants to services before they are evicted or wind up in court-ordered eviction proceedings.

The Working Group recommends that RMC partner with and provide funding to organization(s) currently offering eviction protection services and homeownership counseling in the Third Ward and adjacent communities for a period of 5 years. In developing criteria for vetting and selecting partners who will receive funding, RMC should consider the target users which the organization serves, the demographics of its leadership, and track record for success among other considerations. RMC should monitor the number of households that receive counseling services.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to providing grant(s) to organizations working on providing support services for at-risk renters and homeowners within the Third Ward and Midtown. Funding support is designed to be supplemental to existing committed resources and therefore a commitment of up to $250,000 is recommended.
Outreach Services for Homeless Populations

There has been a dramatic reduction in the homeless population in Houston overall in the past decade, but new threats include natural disasters and flooding, accelerating displacement pressures, and housing instability generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is currently a large population of hard-to-house residents in Midtown and the Third Ward that have specialized needs with regards to mental health and substance abuse.

The Working Group recommends that RMC consider strengthening services available to homeless Houstonians near The Ion by funding a dedicated team of homeless outreach and case management specialists for a period of 5 years. This commitment could facilitate pathways to stable housing and specialized services for a population with complex needs by adding capacity to organizations that have done effective work to date in the area. RMC should consider rolling this out upon the opening of The Ion and facilitate coordination between the selected organization and The Ion property management team. In terms of metrics, RMC should monitor the number of people connected to housing, the number of outreach contacts, and the number of referrals made.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to providing contracts and grants to organization(s) providing services to homeless populations within Midtown.
MWBE Subcontractor(s) for Horizontal Development

As studies by the City of Houston\textsuperscript{ix}, Harris County\textsuperscript{x}, and Port of Houston Authority\textsuperscript{xi} have shown, MWBE firms face great disparity when it comes to accessing contracting opportunities. The Working Group supports RMC’s commitment to expanding opportunities for MWBE participation through the horizontal development of the District Garage and public infrastructure. This commitment aligns with the Third Ward’s Complete Communities’ goals to “expand local opportunities for employment,” such as through opportunities and contracts for locally and black owned businesses. RMC should track and report progress against the participation targets it determines for this commitment.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer shall lead efforts to contract with MWBE businesses for the construction of the District Garage and public infrastructure. The Principal Developer will either 1) lead development of all horizontal public infrastructure and implement programmatic steps to achieve goals/targets for contracting with MWBE businesses in accordance with the City of Houston MWBE participation policies; or 2) cause a Third-Party Developer to initiate programmatic steps designed to achieve the target goals for contracting with MWBE firms in the construction of all public infrastructure.

MWBE Subcontractor(s) to Vertical Developer

The Working Group is pleased to support RMC’s commitment to set targets for design and construction MWBE participation in vertical development of The Ion District. This is not commonly seen in private real estate developments. The Working Group recommends that RMC understand the capacity gaps in the Houston market and take programmatic steps, such as subdividing contracts and/or providing management and technical assistance to MWBE firms to increase their participation and ultimate success in the project. This commitment also aligns with the prior Third Ward Complete Communities goals mentioned. RMC should track and report progress against the participation targets it determines for this commitment.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: The Principal Developer (RMC) commits to proactively engage and cause for selected Third-Party Developer to implement programmatic steps to achieve MWBE participation goals/targets for design and construction in Phase 1 vertical development.

MWBE Investment Opportunities

MWBE firms not only face challenges to accessing project opportunities, but too often lack opportunities to participate as a co-investor on a project. The Working Group supports RMC’s commitment to create opportunities for minority-owned firms or investors to invest capital in the District’s vertical development. This commitment aligns with the Third Ward’s Complete Communities goals to grow opportunities and contracts for minority-owned businesses. RMC should monitor ongoing engagement of the selected MWBE firm.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to proactively provide opportunities for minority-owned investment firms to co-invest alongside the Principal Developer in investment positions that the Principal Developer chooses to take in the vertical development of the district by Third-Party Developers. Principal Developer commits to hire a minority-owned firm to source potential investors and to advise RMC on engagement of investors and evaluation of investment proposals.
Technical Assistance & Supports for Local Hiring & Subcontracting

MWBE firms face a slew of challenges when it comes to accessing opportunities. Too often they are not considered for projects given a lack of capacity or limited networks to partner with a potential prime contractor. For context, The Working Group considered Washington University in St. Louis as a case study, which provided capacity building programs such as an Entrepreneur Forum and Mentoring Program to strengthen MWBE participation. The Working Group also looked to the City of Houston’s Office of Business Opportunity for resources and guidance.iii

The Working Group recommends that RMC engage developers and contractors to partner with and provide capacity building opportunities to minority and women-owned firms. The Working Group also recommends that RMC offer subdivided contracting opportunities to increase participation by MWBE firms by including divisible scopes of work in its Request for Proposal language, as well as provide management and technical assistance to help MWBE firms strengthen their bid packages. RMC should monitor the number of MWBE firms utilizing technical assistance programs, the number of proposals submitted by MWBE firms, and the number of contracts awarded to MWBE firms.

Outreach

MWBE firms are often at a disadvantage when it comes to realizing available project opportunities. Project opportunities are often not marketed broadly, or only available to firms through a particular membership or organization. MWBE firms may also require greater assistance during the bid process and can benefit from platforms that allow for quick and responsive communication. For context, The Working Group considered Washington University in St. Louis as a case study, which took a collaborative approach to recruitment, engaging schools, pre-apprenticeship programs, and contractors. The Working Group also looked to the City of Houston Office of Business Opportunity for resources and guidance.

The Working Group recommends that RMC commit to a variety of outreach methods, including hosting “industry day” events for specific project opportunities – which RMC has successfully done in the past – promoting opportunities via an easily accessible project website that is updated frequently, as well as engaging with trade associations and other community groups to increase reach. RMC should monitor the number of MWBE firms submitting proposals by outreach method engaged and the share of those bids progressing to signed contracts.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: The Principal Developer commits to employing outreach strategies to market subcontracting opportunities for construction, operations, and maintenance within The Ion District, including hosting or causing to have hosted outreach events, providing information on development project opportunities on a project website that is publicly accessible, and engaging with trade associations, community groups, and other relevant organizations to expand outreach to minority-owned firms and residents.
Monitoring
Not only do MWBE firms face barriers to participating in project opportunities, they also often face issues after signing onto a project, such as slow payment from a prime or inequitable treatment.

The Working Group recommends that RMC establish ongoing monitoring and communication protocols to ensure prompt payments and track continuous progress of MWBE firms throughout the project duration. RMC should track the number of contracts awarded to MWBE firms, and the amount of dollars spent on MWBE firms.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: The Principal Developer commits to establishing or causing to have established ongoing monitoring and communication protocols beyond the initial subcontracting level. The Principal Developer also commits to implement systems to monitor prompt payments to MWBE firms and track contracting progress beyond the initial award.

Inclusive Hiring
To further the MWBE commitments listed above, The Working Group recommends that RMC centers inclusive hiring as it embarks in Phase 1 of The Ion District development. By offering or partnering with existing workforce and capacity building programs, RMC can help increase opportunities for inclusive hiring. For context, The Working Group looked at Washington University in St. Louis and Houston’s Office of Business Opportunity as examples.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: The Principal Developer commits to utilizing, developing, or causing to have developed workforce programs and or initiatives to promote the inclusive hiring of residents, in construction, building operations, and property maintenance during The Ion District’s development.
Early Capacity Building Investments

The Working Group supports RMC’s commitment to address community development in the Third Ward by providing grants to local organizations addressing issues and goals outlined in the Third Ward Complete Communities Action Plan for a period of 5 years. As part of this commitment, RMC should monitor the number of organizations receiving funds, and the number of people served by the funding.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to providing grants to area community fund(s) or organization(s) with capacity to make grants to Third-Ward area organizations addressing goals identified in the 2019 Third Ward Complete Communities Action Plan. The Principal Developer will require that grantmaking decisions include engagement of an advisory panel composed of local residents. Funding support is designed to be supplemental to existing committed resources and therefore a minimum commitment of $250,000 is recommended.

Community Access

The Working Group supports RMC’s commitment to provide free meeting space to community organizations for a period of at least 5 years. This initiative aligns with the Third Ward Complete Communities “Civic Engagement” goals to build community capacity, nurture new leaders, and expand political and civic engagement. RMC should monitor room usage, and the number of people served.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer commits to providing free of charge meeting space to community organizations addressing the issues in the 2019 Third Ward Complete Communities Action Plan. Specifically, the Principal Developer will provide a meeting room of at least 200 square feet at least once a month for 5 years within The Ion.

Sustainability

The Working Group supports RMC’s commitment to LEED certification in The Ion District and recommends that RMC track ongoing reporting from developers.

The Working Group endorses the following language for the CBA: Principal Developer Commits to or to cause to have all primarily commercial vertical development of at least 150,000 SF of enclosed space (excluding parking) to apply for and receive LEED Certification.
Affordable Housing Programs & Policies

The Working Group recommends the City examine and implement specific programs and policies to accelerate the creation and preservation of affordable housing, including with approaches that align and leverage the housing commitments made in this CBA for maximum impact.

Existing Program: The Mayor has announced an ambitious effort to create a significant number of new affordable homes created in Houston within the next three years. In the Third Ward, The City of Houston can work closely with Midtown Redevelopment Authority to utilize TIRZ investments and land to expand and deepen affordability of new housing financed by the new Third Ward Affordable Housing Fund.

Existing Program: Land Bank and Land Trust

The City of Houston currently supports Land Bank and Land Trust programs, including programs in the Third Ward. The two entities can be utilized to secure land for new affordable housing units and maintain housing units for long-term affordability. The Working Group recommends that the City continue to invest in these programs to expand their geographic reach to serve additional neighborhoods in the City of Houston.

New Program: Homestead Protections

The Working Group recommends the City continue efforts to inform residents about homestead protections and exemptions available to homeowners under State and Local laws. The Texas Legislature through SB 1943 has provided a tool to enable heirship homeowners to obtain homestead exemptions more easily without needing to go through probate court. The Working Group recommends that the City of Houston implement an initiative to inform residents of homestead protection and exemptions available to heirship homeowners.

Policy Change: Right-To-Purchase Policies

The implementation of right-to-purchase policies on multi-family units subsidized by the City of Houston and its housing component units would allow the City and or residents advanced notice and the right but not the obligation to purchase affordable units prior to the expiration of a unit’s affordability period.

MWBE Subcontracting Bonding Support

The Working Group recommends that the City of Houston examine the possibility of hiring in-house or contracting a third-party bonding financial consultant through the Office of Business Opportunity to assist MWBE vendors in achieving increased bonding capacity to meet public and private project bonding requirements. A bonding financial consultant program could be modeled after the City of Austin’s Bonding for Construction Projects program.xiv
The Working Group came to consensus on the accountability structure for the CBA. The Working Group recommends that RMC produce a “Community Investment Report” and establish a “Community Advisory Council” to monitor and track RMC’s ongoing progress on each commitment.

Community Investment Report
The Working Group recommends that RMC produce and publish an annual Community Investment Report. The report would be made publicly available and include ongoing metrics tracking:

- Community Programs & Access – such as community events available to the public, attendance to programming and events, community space utilized by community groups.
- Economic Opportunity Initiatives – such as job training and placement metrics, and the scale of entrepreneurs and startups incubated and supported.
- Affordable Housing Initiatives – such as affordable housing loans to developers, units developed, income range served, and affordability period.
- MWBE opportunities – such as project level, subcontracting, construction, operations and maintenance, retail, capacity building, hiring, and other initiatives.

Community Advisory Council
In addition to the report, The Working Group recommends that RMC establish a “Community Advisory Council” with the charge of reviewing the annual Community Investment Report and providing recommendations to the City for continuous improvement and outcomes regarding RMC’s commitment. The Council should meet at least once annually for the length of the CBA term.
The Working Group is pleased to support RMC’s commitment to set targets for design and construction MWBE participation in vertical development of The Ion District. This is not commonly seen in private real estate developments. The Working Group recommends that RMC understand the capacity gaps in the Houston market and take programmatic steps, such as subdividing contracts and/or providing management and technical assistance to MWBE firms to increase their participation and ultimate success in the project. This commitment also aligns with the prior Third Ward Complete Communities goals mentioned. RMC should track and report progress against the participation targets it determines for this commitment.

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Rice Management Company and the City of Houston hosted a three-part community workshop series in September-October of 2020 to share the vision of The Ion District and provide for a public discussion of project opportunities and potential impacts. The workshops focused on three core topics: 1) Economic Opportunities through Job-Training and Entrepreneurship, 2) Preserving and Expanding Housing Affordability, and 3) Hiring and Contracting Opportunities in The Ion District. This document provides a summary of the discussion during the moderated panel and public breakout sessions, as well as takeaways from the online survey. Please see the following links for Q&A responses: Economic Opportunities, Housing, Hiring & Contracting.

**ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY | September 29th, 2020**

Key Ideas from the Panel (Moderated by Landi Spearman):

Warren Broadnax – CEO & Founder, She’s Happy Foundation

- The number one challenge for people of color is the lack of access to capital. In addition to different incubator programs and educational courses, The Ion can help introduce aspiring entrepreneurs to venture capitalists and potential investors.
- Access to education is key – as an entrepreneur it’s easy to focus on being the most innovative business, but it’s just as important to know your numbers and understand balance sheets and income statements. Making sure entrepreneurs have access to that knowledge is critical.

Gordon Taylor – Co-Founder & CEO, Guzo

- You need diversity for innovation and a central hub like The Ion can allow that to happen seamlessly whether it is digital or physical. Diverse backgrounds, mindsets and thought can come together to bring greater innovative opportunities.
- In addition to access to capital, it’s also about the education around capital. As an entrepreneur it is important to learn how to put structures in place. Having that knowledge in a centralized place, like The Ion, where anyone can have access to and get plugged into the ecosystem, can be immensely helpful for entrepreneurs.

Sheroo Mukhtiar – Executive Director & CEO, SER Houston

- Providing people who have a wide range of needs with a diverse set of services and options can help them better find solutions so they can provide for themselves and for their families. It’s more than just connecting low-income communities with information, but also supporting their access to education and resources that they can then adopt for their own advancement.
- Collaboration across educational players, institutions, employers, healthcare, etc. can really help bridge the access gap. Partnerships are key to making this project successful.

Archie Blanson – Interim President, Lone Star College-North Harris

- The digital divide is a real challenge to providing equal access to education. Lone Star College gave over 3,000 computers to students due to COVID-19, but not all students had Wi-Fi or a suitable environment to learn.
- There is social and economic value to education. We need to make sure that our citizens understand that this world is moving quickly and that it is important to learn how to do things in an efficient, 21st-century way.
Workshop participants offered the following insights and reflections during the community breakout sessions:

- Local hiring at The Ion is important. Workshop participants want to see that dollars are reinvested in the community and not towards big companies from outside of Houston.
- There is a great need to center diversity and inclusion within tech and innovation. Participants observed that Black/Brown communities often lack technology or resources to access and afford training programs. They also questioned what access looks like for those who have limited access to transportation, have a criminal record, or are homeless, disabled, or undocumented. They want to see more specificity about who The Ion seeks to serve.
-Expressed concern about how The Ion may potentially have adverse effects on small businesses or cause displacement in the neighborhood.
- Would like to see programs at The Ion range from financial courses for the community to summer camp programs for local K-12 students.
- Noted that businesses need different resources at different life stages – they would like to see The Ion provide resources and services to all companies, regardless of their maturity. Many early startups, especially, lack a basic understanding of how to set up a company, while other types of businesses may need marketing or tech assistance.
-Expressed a desire to see The Ion help provide access to capital, perhaps through a fund that can offer contract-based loans or working capital.
-Expressed importance for The Ion to provide services and programming beyond typical 9-5 hours to accommodate people of all types.
- Would like to see dedicated space within The Ion for community networking and programming that can allow for organic relationship building.
- Would like to see plans for tracking KPIs and measuring impact at The Ion.
- Would like to see continued transparency from RMC throughout the development process.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY WORKSHOP | October 6th, 2020
Key Ideas from the Panel (Moderated by Laurie Vignaud):

Assata Richards – Founding Director, Sankofa Research Institute

- Community land trusts that center community control and self-determination can provide long-term stability and permanent protection to current residents.
- A neighborhood-based housing trust fund that is controlled and directed by entities in the neighborhood whose priorities and commitments are to the community can help create affordable rental and homeownership opportunities. While loans are available from entities like LISC, the existing cost burdens of homeowners and long-time residents make it difficult and financially unfeasible to execute an affordable housing deal.
- Paying attention to Section 8 housing properties that are ripe for redevelopment and making sure those naturally occurring affordable housing units are not going into private markets but are turned into affordable housing, focused on no more than 60% AMI.

Mary Lawler – Executive Director, Avenue

- Given the need for deep affordability and permanent housing solutions, housing preservation is more cost-effective than constructing new affordable units.
- Ancillary services, such as those outlined in the Third Ward’s Communities Action Plan, are an important piece to housing stability. These include housing counselling to ensure homeowners know how to preserve the assets they already have, challenge property taxes, and obtain homestead exemptions, or legal assistance for renters to ensure they know how to exercise their rights to stay.
Rudy Rasmus – Lead Pastor & Founder, St. John’s Church

- RMC can become an equity investor and partner with local, ethnic, minority developers who are in the community to build more affordable housing. This can not only fight against the loss of affordable housing, but also the erosion of economic opportunities within the neighborhood.
- The capital stack too often depends on municipalities. A broader municipal subsidy can help bring more equity investors to the Third Ward to meet the objectives of both creating greater housing affordability for the community and meeting a reasonable return for investors, while taking some of the pressure from city’s coffers.

Jason Hyman – Owner, Realinc, LLC.

- As an influential entity, RMC should be at the forefront of policies that protect homeowners and renters, as well as incentivizes private market to build affordable housing (such as shortened permitting timeframes).
- RMC can help cultivate synergies between vertical and horizontal players to ensure that “big boxes” are not created – quality of life is key. There needs to be greater incentives for the private market – both large and small players – to be brought along with the existing nonprofit and academic footprint to ensure collaborative accountability.

Workshop participants offered the following insights and reflections during the community breakout sessions:

- The notion that people who grew up in the neighborhood have a right to stay in the neighborhood resonated with many – those people shouldn’t be forced out because they can’t afford to be here.
- Expressed that land prices dictate developers and present a major challenge to creating affordable housing. And even with free land, it is immensely difficult for a non-profit or affordable housing developer to build affordable housing because of expensive infrastructure costs, which are not supported by the City or community development programs.
- Expressed that rapidly increasing cost of land and high ongoing operating costs (such as property taxes) pose challenges for homeownership affordability.
- Want to see RMC provide financial support for economic development. As a major equity partner, RMC can encourage other private sources.
- Raised concerns about how RMC plans to identify additional burdens that local residents face, and the AMI level that future affordable housing stock will serve.
- Saw value in the community land trust model (and found the presentations and panel informative and meaningful).
- Welcome RMC’s partnership with homeless and housing services.
- Would like to see greater incentives for homeownership transfers across family generations.
- Open to new models for affordability, such as rent-to-own housing.
- Requested continued transparency and open dialogue with the community.

HIRING & CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES WORKSHOP | October 8th, 2020
Key Ideas from the Panel (Moderated by Angelique Bartholomew):

Carol Guess – Board Chair, Greater Houston Black Chamber of Commerce

- It is important that prime and subs hire from the local community to enable wealth building and wealth creation. We need to ensure that they extend beyond their usual partners, even if there is a level of comfort and trust with working with the same contractors.
- The Greater Houston Black Chamber of Commerce is currently running business ratings training and programs that pair members with joint venture opportunities, which help expand the capacity of small and minority-owned businesses.
Tony Council – President, TLC Engineering

- It is important that small businesses get their MWBE certifications. The next step after landing a job is focusing on capacity building for long-term growth.
- Joint ventures are a mechanism that can enable small businesses to grow capacity. It allows small businesses to be at the table when a deal is negotiated and when the check is written. It also allows for technology transfer.

Paula Mendoza – President & CEO, Possible Missions, Inc.

- Partnerships, such as joint ventures, with larger firms are immensely helpful for small businesses. These partnerships can provide mentorship, capacity building, and educational opportunities for small business owners, allowing them the experience to bid for future work.
- Contract compliance and accountability is key. Too often primes don’t pay their subs on time – this puts a great strain on subs, who cannot then pay their suppliers or worker, and subsequently can’t complete the work even though it has nothing to do with their ability. There needs to be way to hold primes accountable to subs. Perhaps primes don’t get paid until they have paid their subs.

Abdul Haleem Muhammad – Minister; Founder, NTE Planning Consultants and Accepting Challenges to Improve Our Nation Community Development Corporation

- The Ion District can provide economic opportunities to neighboring communities. If we cannot statistically lower the unemployment rate in specific zip codes along the southeast corridor, then we would have failed.
- Equity and resilience are key to community economic development. We must ensure that opportunities are available to all, including those who are low-income or face criminal records.

Workshop participants offered the following insights and reflections during the community breakout sessions:

- Expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be part of the workshop and RMC’s transparency and openness with the community.
- Expressed that black contractors face challenges with building relationships with key decision-makers. Using programming and training to create greater awareness and build capacity for MWBEs can be valuable.
- Noted that it is especially difficult for people with past criminal records to access contracting opportunities.
- Suggested having an independent entity to hold a general contractor or prime accountable to MWBEs.
- Expressed desire for greater access to and provision of resources, networking opportunities, and business support services from The Ion.
- Would like to see a greater share of local hiring and MWBEs.
- Want to learn more about the bidding process for The Ion and The Ion District.
As part of the Community Stakeholder Workshop series, RMC conducted surveys across the three categories of Economic Opportunities, Housing Affordability, and Inclusive Hiring & Contracting, which helped inform conversations during the workshop, as well as throughout the CBA Working Group process.

**Economic Opportunities**

*What are the top barriers to economic opportunity for business owners and entrepreneurs in the Houston tech sector?*

Survey options included: 1) Financial constraints to fund the startup of the business, 2) Appropriate financial resources for ongoing operational expenses, 3) New financial, operational and/or sales challenges due to COVID-19, 4) Connecting to the right people with purchasing power, 5) Securing appropriate and qualified staff, 6) Business skills and other educational resources, 7) None of the above, 8) Other.

Among those who are currently entrepreneurs/business owners, “Financial constraints to fund the start-up of the business” was the top barrier to economic opportunity. For those who are not currently entrepreneurs/business owners, “Financial constraints to fund start-up” and “Appropriate financial resources” were the top barriers.

*What are the top barriers to job entry or career mobility amongst Houstonians in the tech and innovation industry/sector?*

Survey options included: 1) Access to opportunities, 2) Awareness of job openings, 3) Required prior work experience, 4) Appropriate culturally sensitive communications and work environments, 5) Required education and/or skills, 6) Appropriate and consistent transportation, 7) Inflexible and/or long work schedule, 8) Access to appropriate introductions, networks and/or mentors, 9) None of the above, 10) Other.

“Access to opportunities” and “Awareness of job openings” are the top two barriers selected by respondents, regardless of whether they have experience in, have sought or plan to seek employment in the tech industry. For those with no experience in the tech industry, “Required education and/or skills” is also a major barrier.

**Housing Opportunities**

*Have you experienced any of the following barriers to achieving your desired housing situation in your neighborhood?*

Survey options included: 1) I have not experienced any barriers to achieving my desired housing situation, 2) I have had trouble affording my rent or mortgage, 3) I have had trouble affording a house or apartment in the neighborhood that I desire to live in, 4) I have had trouble finding the type of housing that I want to live in (for example: apartment, single family house, townhouse, or duplex), 5) I have had trouble affording maintenance and repairs for my home, 6) My landlord does not provide adequate maintenance and/or repairs, 7) I have been evicted from my house or apartment, 8) I have had trouble securing financing/loan amount to purchase my desired home, 9) Select All, 10) Other.

The majority of homeowners “have not experienced any barriers to achieving desired housing situation,” while the majority of renters expressed “trouble affording a house or apartment in the neighborhood that I desire to live in.”

*In your neighborhood, what do you believe are the biggest challenges for housing affordability?*

Survey options included: 1) Not enough new housing is being built, 2) New housing units are unaffordable to buy, 3) New housing units are unaffordable to rent, 4) Existing homes are becoming unaffordable to buy, 5) Existing homes are becoming unaffordable to rent, 6) Homeowners can’t afford upgrades to existing housing, 7) Homeowners can’t afford rising property taxes.
Homeowners and renters similarly expressed the unaffordability to buy and/or rent new housing units and existing homes as the biggest challenges.

**Hiring & Contracting Opportunities**

What barriers have you experienced in responding and/or contracting on large projects that we should be aware of?

Survey options included: Receiving the solicitation in a timely manner with appropriate response time, 2) Having enough capacity as required for projects of this size, 3) Collaborating with other contractors to build capacity, 4) Sub-contracting contract issues with the prime contractor, 5) Exclusion from prime contractor opportunities, 6) Inclusion in the project at a level that builds capacity, 7) Other, 8) Select All

Barriers experienced by respondents varied widely. Among those in the professional services industry, “Inclusion in the project at a level that builds capacity” was listed as a top barrier. Most respondents also expressed that they have done or are interested in doing business with the City of Houston or other municipalities.
This report is endorsed by the members of the CBA Working Group:

Errol Allen II, Alpha Merit Group Educational Foundation (AMGEF) and Houston Black Leadership Institute (HBLI)
Paul D. Charles, Neighborhood Recovery Community Development Corporation
Carol Guess, Greater Houston Black Chamber
Jason Hyman, Realinc, Office of Jason T, Hyman
Paula Mendoza, Possible Missions / Houston Minority Supplier Diversity Council Board Member
Dr. Laura Murillo, Houston Hispanic Chamber
Mike Pittman, UpCDC / East End Makers Hub
Dr. Rudy Rasmus, St. John's UMC / Temenos / Bread of Life
Helen Stagg, Change Happens
Laurie Vignaud, Unity National Bank
Jay Vinekar, Midtown Super Neighborhood #62
Lindsey Williams, City of Houston
Susan Young, South Main Alliance

i HR&A analysis of EMSI data (2019).
iii Per Scholas. RMC Community Stakeholder Workshop Economic Opportunities Presentation (Link).
vi EEDC Small Business Training Program, Philadelphia’s University City District’s Small Business Services, and Indiana Small Business Development Center.
vii Kinder Institute HCDC Dashboard.
viii Durham Affordable Housing Loan Fund. RMC Community Stakeholder Workshop Housing Affordability Presentation (Link).
ix Harris County Eviction Pilot Program, Houston Chronicle (Link).
x City of Houston Construction Services Disparity Study (2012).
xi Harris County Disparity Study (2020).

xii Port of Houston Disparity Study (2020).

xiii Washington University in St. Louis Office of Supplier Diversity and City of Houston’s Office of Business Opportunity. RMC Community Stakeholder Workshop Inclusive Hiring & Contracting Presentation (Link).
xiv City of Austin Bonding for Construction Projects Program.