

# THE FABULOUS FIFTH: A REVITALIZATION STRATEGY FOR HOUSTON'S FIFTH WARD



**HOUSTON, TEXAS R/UDAT**  
**JULY 27-30, 2012**

**AIA** Communities by Design

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## THE DESIGN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The American Institute of Architects has a 45-year history of public service work. The AIA's Center for Communities by Design has conducted design assistance projects across the country. Through these public service programs, over 1,000 professionals from more than 30 disciplines have provided millions of dollars in professional pro bono services to more than 200 communities across the country, engaging thousands of participants in community-driven planning processes. Its projects have led to some of the most recognizable places in America, such as San Francisco's Embarcadero, Portland's Pearl District, and the Santa Fe Railyard Park.

***Regional and Urban Design Assistance Teams (R/UDAT):*** Created in 1967, the AIA's R/UDAT program pioneered the modern charrette process by combining multi-disciplinary teams in dynamic, multi-day grassroots processes to produce community visions, action plans and recommendations.

***Sustainable Design Assessment Teams (SDAT):*** In 2005, as a response to growing interest and concern about local sustainability planning, the AIA launched a companion program to the R/UDAT that allowed it to make a major institutional investment in public service work to assist communities in developing policy frameworks and long-term sustainability plans. Since 2005, the SDAT program has worked with over 50 towns, cities and regions.

The Center's Design Assistance Team programs operate with three guiding principles:

- **Multi-disciplinary Expertise.** Each project is designed as a customized approach to community assistance which incorporates local realities and the unique challenges and assets of each community. As a result, each design assistance team includes an interdisciplinary focus and a systems approach to assessment and recommendations, incorporating and examining cross-cutting topics and relationships between issues. In order to accomplish this task, the Center forms multi-disciplinary teams that combine a range of disciplines and professions in an integrated assessment and design process.
- **Enhanced Objectivity.** The goal of the design assistance team program is to provide communities with a framework for action. Consequently, each project team is constructed with the goal of bringing an objective perspective to the community that can transcend and transform the normal politics or public dialogue. Team members are deliberately selected from geographic regions outside of the host community, and national AIA teams are typically representative of a wide range of community settings. Team members all agree to serve pro bono, and do not engage in business development activity in association with their service. They do not serve a particular client. The team's role is to provide an independent analysis and unencumbered technical advice that serves the public interest.

- Public Participation. The AIA has a four decade tradition of designing community-driven processes that incorporate substantial public input through a multi-faceted format that includes public workshops, small group sessions, stakeholder interviews, formal meetings and presentations. This approach allows the national team to build on the substantial local expertise already present and available within the community and leverage the best existing knowledge available in formulating its recommendations.

For more information on AIA Design Assistance programs, including our 2012 program sites, go to <http://www.aia.org/about/initiatives/AIAS075425>.





## OVERVIEW

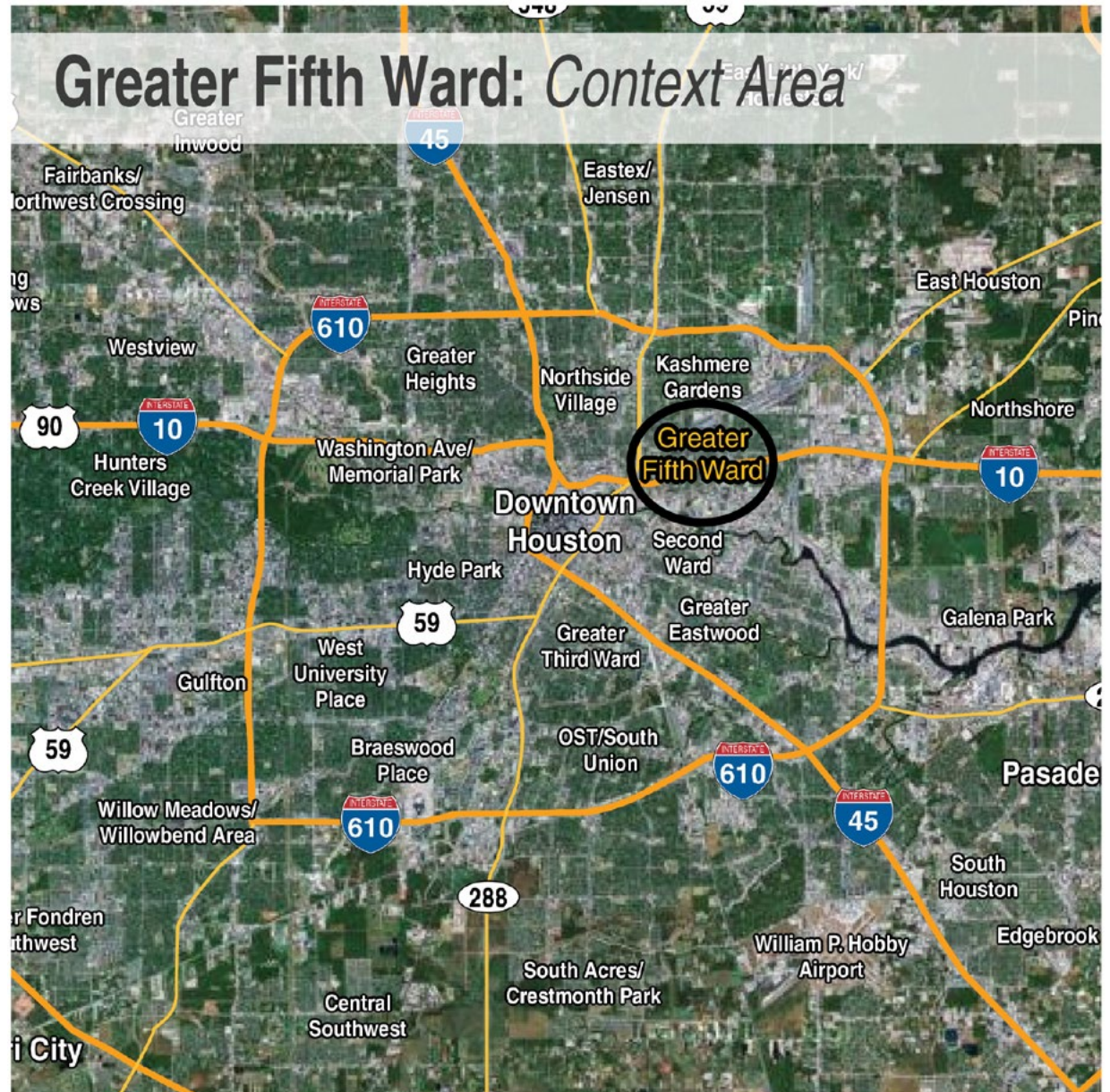


## Purpose

This AIA R/UDAT project provided strategic assistance in repositioning and revitalizing a deteriorated neighborhood of Houston that is a central part of the City's Fifth Ward and its traditional "main street" along the Lyons Avenue corridor. Historically a predominately African-American neighborhood, this part of the Fifth Ward has deteriorated, having lost much of its physical, economic and social fabric. Portions of the neighborhood were demolished and separated when two major highways were created, and their intersection occupies land that was once a central part of the community – Interstate 10 and US Route 58. Houston's downtown and all of the other neighborhoods that surround it have experienced substantial growth and positive economic reinvestment, as urban living choices have become increasingly favored. This is one of the last near-city neighborhoods that has not yet been reached by substantial market-based reinvestment in housing and other uses.

## Project Area and Context

The planning area largely consisted of the portion of the Fifth Ward bounded on the south by the I-10 Interstate highway, the elevated Eastex Freeway (Route 59), and



*The Fifth Ward in context.*

extensive and heavily used rail yards and rail lines along its northern edge. The eastern boundary included land along Lockwood Drive, and was extended to consider the blocks and streets that continue up to the edge of a north/south at-grade rail corridor that is the effective boundary with the adjacent Denver Harbor neighborhood,





***Fifth Ward R/UDAT project Area. The project area is centered on Lyons Avenue and is largely bounded by the rail and highway infrastructure.***

which has a predominately Hispanic population. The western edge of the planning area was extended to include Lyons Avenue and its intersection with a series of streets on the “other side” of the Route 59 alignment. Historically part of the Fifth Ward and its African-American community, there are many empty or underutilized parcels that can be beneficially planned and redeveloped together with the portions of the neighborhood on the east side of the highway, so that both are coordinated.



The team's planning and urban design also took into account the character and opportunities to strengthen connections to adjacent neighborhoods and districts. The edges include the Denver Harbor neighborhoods to the east and low-scale residential neighborhoods across the rail alignment to the north. The Southern edge includes a changing residential and former industrial area where multi-family investment is underway. To the west, there are large parcels of land with a variety of relatively low-scale industrial-oriented uses that replaced the neighborhood and commercial districts once centered on Jensen Street, and which was removed to create the two highways and their interchange.

### **Goals of the Fifth Ward R/UDAT**

The overall goal for this initiative has been to envision a path that will lead to revitalization of an entire neighborhood. Revitalization will sustain the community and the population that lives here in an environment that is safer, healthier and provides significant improvements to its quality of life. But to become a thriving neighborhood again, substantial numbers of new residents, businesses and institutions need to be invited into the neighborhood so that it becomes more economically, ethnically and culturally diverse over time.

Long term trends in reinvestment need to be reversed, or the situation for the existing population and links to its cultural past will continue to fade. A challenge for this neighborhood is to attract beneficial reinvestment in the short term. But, from the start, methods need to be invented to sustain and then manage development over

the long term in a way that will meet broader community goals. These goals include creating a healthy, economically sustainable and balanced neighborhood that adds value, population, and business opportunities - while strengthening the existing community fabric and identity. Innovative methods are needed for the physical redesign of a re-emergent neighborhood in terms of its urban design, neighborhood landscape, physical and social infrastructure. The neighborhood needs to attain a successful and appropriate new image, replacing the negative branding that has been dominant. Importantly, effective methods for managing land use, development and design need to be created in the complete absence of traditional zoning and other well-understood tools to shape change in other communities. The vision and the tools must fit this community and this city.

Several immediate opportunities have helped form the goals for this R/UDAT initiative as well. The Starbucks Coffee Company has selected this neighborhood as part of its corporate community outreach and partnering program. In October of this year, thousands of volunteers will be contributing to a campaign of neighborhood improvements ranging from the repair of housing exteriors, clean ups, and the expansion of an existing park (the "Fifth Ward Jam"). In addition, the neighborhood organizers have sought input on ideas for streetscape improvements, lighting and neighborhood monuments and signs to help build a better place, image and brand for the community. As a result, this R/UDAT team has a focused goal of informing that process and providing input and ideas for the design and location of some of the improvements.



The neighborhood will also be a participant in the distribution of federal funding through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) associated with impact mitigation from a hurricane that damaged the Houston area. These funds need to be targeted towards housing needs in the district. They represent potential reinvestment of tens of millions of dollars in the relative short run. This money may also be matched by other funds that the City of Houston is seeking from the Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program that may supplement resources. As a result, this R/UDAT team has had a goal of articulating strategies for the use of those funds that might best contribute to the larger goals of neighborhood revitalization.

Working with the community and the many R/UDAT participants, the team framed a vision for the future. Related to all of the other goals, the team responded to the community's objective to have specific, actionable recommendations. The team responded by distinguishing the key actions that should be taken to accomplish the vision, expressed as Keys to the Future". This was followed by detailed observations and recommendations on a variety of topics, assembled in this report as "elements of Success". At the end of this report, we have also provided a focused discussion of how these ideas could be implemented, and an extended checklist that sorts through all of the recommendations.



**VISION**



## THE VISION: SUSTAIN - INVITE - CELEBRATE

The vision for the future of the Fifth Ward looks towards a time when the blocks and buildings are once again filled with people, and it is a vital place to live, work and visit. Many of the people will be the long-time residents whose ability to stay and thrive has been protected and enhanced. But it will also include those that have returned or have sought out this African American community that builds on the past and creates new traditions and a heritage for the future. There will be many others who choose to live here, valuing the diversity of choices and the distinctive character that make the Fifth Ward such an interesting and rewarding place to live. Lots of people will know the district because of the special events and places along Lyons Avenue, its food, art and unique businesses. In short, it will be a healthy neighborhood, in all the ways that the term is interpreted. But within this vision, the question that must be answered, is what is the spirit of this place?

The character of the future Fifth Ward will grow from a commitment to **sustain** the culture and population that have made it their home; to **invite** new residents, uses, events, places and opportunities to share in the future; and to **celebrate** the heritage of the past and the possibilities of the future assembled through the music, art, and lively expression of the community.

We find great value in the goal to sustain, invite and celebrate the Fifth Ward as we approach this rebuilding, charged by honoring community memory while driving forward to include a future that will transform the pejorative view of the district that

those in Houston - and well beyond – have held for decades. This is truly an invitation to join a progressive journey to the Fifth's next level, as participants, as residents or visitors, to its historic places experienced through junctions and gateways of human story and activity that can be shared by all. The forward movement of the Fifth Ward will take flight in the celebration of historical triumph of those living ordinary lives that become extraordinary. By the raising of public history we will illumine long standing, recurring traditions of Fifth Ward Houstonians that grasped principles to allow them to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles as phoenix leaders to shake the dust and rise to the occasion of becoming ministers, lawyers, congressmen, orators, educators, musicians, hip hop entertainers, boxers, entrepreneurs, American change-makers.

How do we articulate history so it becomes part of other people's lives, other than our own? How do we interpret the journey, conversation? Is it a conversation about commerce, industry? Is it a conversation about reclamation and celebration? Is it a conversation about the notion of values? American values, universal values, or is it African American values particularly? The Fifth Ward becomes a product of imaginative reclamation of its authentic history, shaped by its re-presentation as the basis of what will become shared terrain for its future diversity.

The strength of the Fifth Ward's religious foundations can be witnessed by sustained continuum of family commitment to its churches seen in the weekly return of families long relocated to other communities, that continue attend worship services here.

This thread of Fifth ward fabric attests to the church as anchor of community and its present hold on those who desire to come back as residents, yet they await the presence of conditions that allow that dream to become possible. The agency of the African American Fifth Ward community assumed a certain clarity of forward thrust, emerging from the post-civil war era. The Masonic Lodge on Lyons Avenue, an apparent vestige of early leadership building component, still marks significant advances to progress.

Persistence of the African American memory as American memory in the case of the Fifth ward is to jump forward to envision what this community will look like and feel like without the loss of identity.

This community has within its vision to make everybody capable, the present resident and the new yet to come. Twenty years ahead, the look, the feel of the fabric will be enhanced by innovation and invention, yet the mercurial leap forward to the outcome can be equated to the community citizenry to invite others in-- to become diverse without losing sight of its identity and its sacred traditions.

On Lyons Avenue, we envision a valued, thriving historic and new theater district that serves to preserve the past memories, with the Deluxe Theater, emblematic of an earlier age and the active Jam Theater as a performance space for emerging new theater works based on authentic people, places, and events of history, fantasy, and festival. A visitor responds to her visit:

"Lyons Avenue is not what it was and yet it is! I just walked through history in the renovated Deluxe Theater and as I walked further the children playing their instruments in the festival at the Jam Theater blew my mind. Residents beyond the Jam greet me with warmth and interest as a smorgasbord of people that moved in directions toward me and passing by sensing the joy of sweet barbeque aromas dancing in the street. Certainly this could not be the reputedly dangerous Fifth Ward." As we exit this lovely corridor we see a healthy community that has beautiful gardens, free of trash and litter. Neighbors are talking on their porches as children play in the park. Where there were separate communities there now exists include the Convergence of cultures and people, having common experiences on bridges dispelling differences and creating broader learning communities, supporting bonding for the growth of interdependent community relationships. A new trail links all of these places, connecting memories, stories and the community today.

The new store front filled with newly created products with 3D printers indicates the embrace of innovative education, with an emphasis on STEM and STEAM education in secondary schools, supported by technical universities, moving those seeking employment to make innovative products utilizing the technological skilled workforce that has emerged here.

Residents participating in Twenty-first Century education will experience a competitive edge, on par with other progressive communities. The multifaceted approach to the Fifth Ward 's participation in Twenty-first Century life will make accessible the cultural





## MAPPING THE FUTURE

The vision for the Fifth Ward will be embodied in numerous physical changes and reinvestments that spread throughout the entire area.

The most fundamental change will be the repopulation of the entire neighborhood, with new homes and multifamily buildings replacing empty lots and underutilized parcels, filling out blocks. The pattern of steady decline must be reversed through a strategic mix of affordable and market-rate units that are built and brought on line in rapid succession to reclaim entire streets and blocks with constant attention to the need to include substantial increments of market-rate units. Through a managed reinvestment program, the community will create significant housing choice catering to a broad range of incomes, family sizes and age groups. Much of this will take the form of new and repaired single family homes along many of the blocks that flank Lyons Avenue. However, in certain areas, multi-family housing complexes will line the streets, including the blocks north of I-10 and in the gateway areas near the Route 59 Interchange and the Lyons and Jensen intersection. The streets will be lined with sidewalks and shade trees, providing paths between all of the schools, shops, community gardens and small businesses that dot the area.

The Lyons Avenue of the future will reflect the past and regain its stature as the “Main Street” of the neighborhood that surrounds it. In addition to serving as the center of the revitalized residential neighborhood, it will have distinctive segments that repair,

expand and connect the neighborhood to its adjacent districts and the entire region through significant new investments with substantial community benefits.

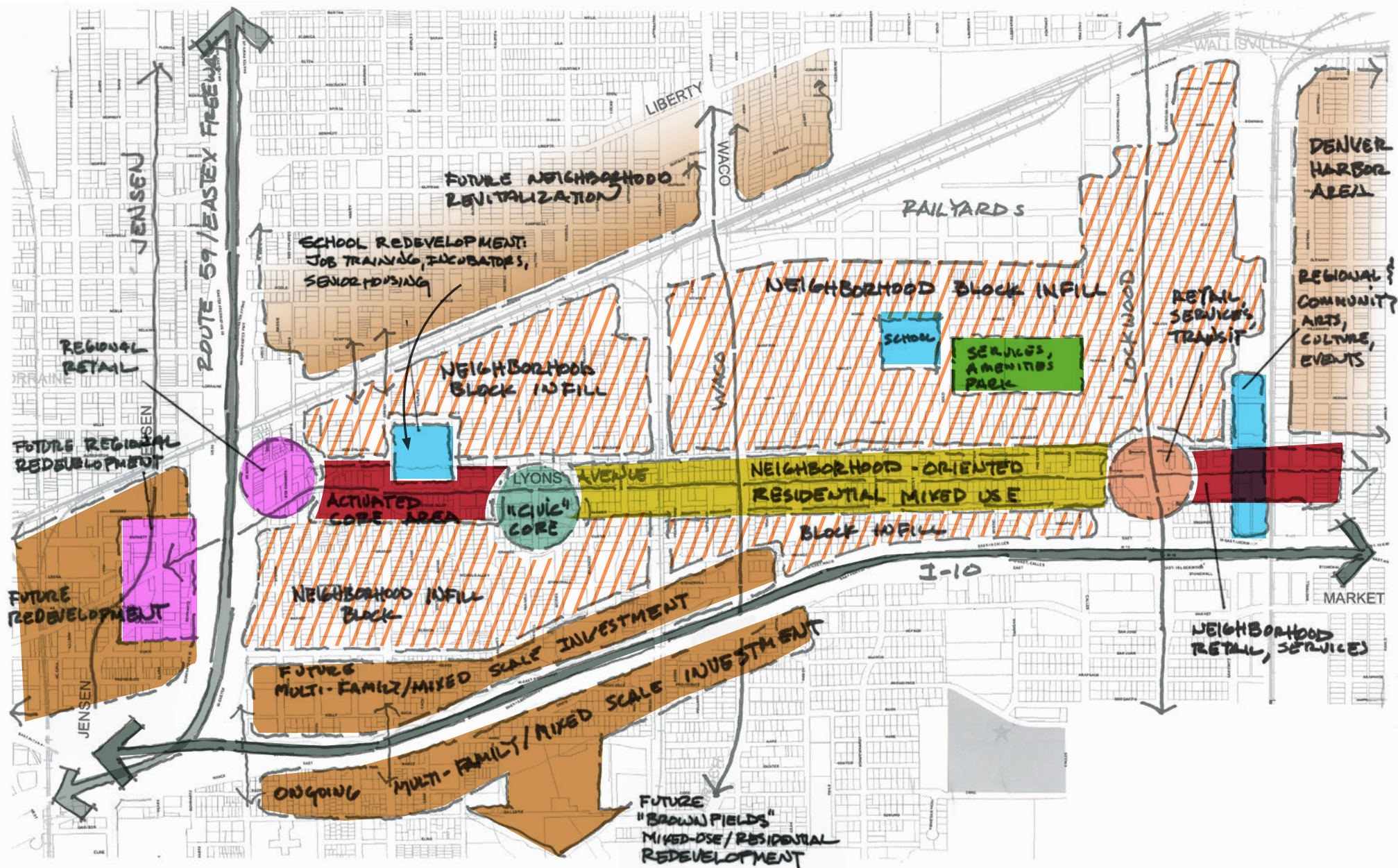
The core of the residentially-oriented community will be marked by an outstanding cluster of civic uses, community and neighborhood-oriented businesses along a few blocks centered near the intersection of Lyons Avenue and Gregg Street. Anchored by the image and events of the Deluxe Theater and the outdoor performances at the Fifth Ward Community Jam, there will be a compact cluster of small businesses and shops to complement the housing, social and community services and churches that are part of the area today. Pleasant, tree-lined sidewalks along well-lit streets will lead along Lyons Avenue and into the surrounding blocks so that everyone can walk to the activities and amenities that have been assembled here.

Significant changes and reinvestment will occur at both ends of Lyons Avenue.

The area around the intersection of Lyons and Jensen Drive will be transformed into a mixed-use district with businesses and stores that serve the entire region, along with multi-family housing organized into a dense urban district that will be a highly visible gateway to the Fifth Ward. Across the highway, major new retailing hubs may be built – accessible to the highway and catering to a very broad range of customers as well as providing convenient goods and services for the Fifth Ward residents. Importantly, this cluster of regional-serving businesses will be a source of employment for residents of the Fifth Ward, who will be minutes away by walking, bicycling or taking the enhanced



bus routes that will need to become more frequent to move the growing population and serve the destinations that will be created. Special lighting will be introduced into the area – above, below and along the highway and into the heart of the Fifth Ward – as the lights will come back on in the entire neighborhood. At the western end of the neighborhood, a new cluster of stores and a community center will be created near where the Lyons Avenue Corridor passes across the rail alignment and into the Denver Harbor district. The cluster of uses will provide amenities and activities that can help join the two communities, within an easy walk to the nearby bus plaza along Lockwood Drive. The edges of the neighborhood will include sound walls and landscaped buffers that screen the neighboring homes and apartments from highway and railroad noise. The routes along the bridges and streets that pass into the Fifth Ward will be marked by artwork and landscaping. These features will not only mark the gateways, but continue throughout the area as networks of deliberately planted lines of trees, creative artwork, and a system of distinctive lighting that celebrates the special music events, festivals and places that are part of the heart of the Fifth Ward.



Future land use and development patterns along Lyons Avenue, the neighborhood and its edges.





## KEYS TO THE FUTURE

## **AN OVERVIEW OF THE FIFTH WARD**

What follows is a cross-section of the findings derived from our interaction with members of the Fifth Ward community combined with some general observations of the R/UDAT team. We used these observations to sort through the critical issues facing the residents, which in turn led to many of the suggestions and next steps to be found later in this report. This is an admittedly abbreviated list, but we believe it captures many of the concerns and hopes of the community.

### **CATEGORY I: ESSENTIALS**

It is almost impossible to imagine a new course in life if certain basic needs are not being satisfied or if attending to them is occupying an inordinate amount of time. In the course of our community outreach meetings and conversations with residents, the Fifth Ward R/UDAT team observed the consistent return to some fundamental quality of life matters worthy of attention and solutions. Below are three we considered to be priorities.

#### ***Security: Personal and Family***

Nothing is more elemental to one's well being than an assumed sense of security, however one might choose to define it. We were given a number of admonitions to be aware while on the street and there were many mentions of crime (much of it greatly diminished from what it was a decade ago). We are defining security in the Fifth Ward as the ability by anyone to walk anywhere at anytime without anxiety. This should be an aspirational goal and, if achieved, will be a powerful indicator of the health of the area.

#### ***Food: High Quality, Reasonable Prices, and Nearby***

The crisis of diet in the United States leading to early onset of obesity and Type II diabetes has been well documented, most recently in the HBO four part special, "Weight of the Nation" (see <http://theweightofthenation.hbo.com/>). The issue is not confined to any demographic, age or geographic area but it can be particularly acute when dietary options are limited. The Fifth Ward presents challenges with regard to access to full supermarkets, fresh produce and meats, and reduced costs, remedies to which should be a high priority.

#### ***Education: Equipping All Learners For the Future***

The global future is one that is highly competitive and demanding of an educated and skilled workforce. The majority of residents in the Fifth Ward have not attained a high school degree and only 4% a college degree. Modes of education are changing rapidly not only for K-12 but also for the atypical student - a single parent wanting to achieve a bachelor's degree, for example. With an eye on required outcomes, challenging options, and the required support, it should be goal of the Fifth Ward to take advantage of the many partners available to improve access to high impact educational opportunities at any stage of life. Nothing is more critical to the future vitality of the study area.

#### ***Wellness***

Too often we consider health only when we don't have it. If at all possible, it would be preferable to address health on a daily basis and the numerous choices we make

which can foster general wellness. This assumes, of course, that we have the power of choice, something that needs to be delivered to the Fifth Ward on any number of fronts. The creation of the Health Center will be a great boost to creating greater awareness of lifestyle, diet, and other issues that are, in part, a function of the built environment.

## **CATEGORY II: BUILDING THE COMMUNITY**

Assuming the essential issues above are addressed, it is possible to consider some of the “next in line” topics that lead to a truly healthy and vibrant community. Several of the items below involve quite specific suggestions that are extensively addressed in the following pages of this report.

### ***Existing and New Housing Prototypes***

The available housing types in the Fifth Ward, some of which are variants on the indigenous residential architecture of New Orleans, are to be respected even in their often distressed state. While not architecturally significant, they serve to set a unique tone and texture to the area. As new housing models are proposed and built, there must be increased attention to the quality of design, sustainable principles, and craftsmanship if the received message is to be one of durability in the neighborhood.

### ***Neighborhood Maintenance and Infrastructure***

Invariably, residents commented on the obvious blight on many blocks. Partially collapsed houses, overgrown vegetation, and intermittent piles of refuse all contribute to an impression of neglect and lack of community. Such indicators also

repel investment and potential home ownership, both of which need to be increased. For the benefit of current and future residents, every effort should be made to attend to the abandoned areas (which are “common” by default) as well as the overall infrastructure of the built environment.

### ***Employment: Training and Opportunity Building***

The built environment, even with all right components in place, cannot guarantee quality of life without meaningful employment. Preparing people for the contemporary workplace a requirement across the country and no less so in the Fifth Ward. We noted the potential of programs dedicated to construction and advanced craftsmanship that are directly related to the needs of the community and the issues above. Other residents in our public meetings brought forth a desire to have a business incubation office and shared service center in support of new homegrown ventures. The future of work is changing in the U.S. and demands that this sort of entrepreneurial thinking be a part of any community.

### ***Transportation and Access***

Of course, not all business or other activities are local. The Fifth Ward, while hemmed in by major transportation arteries, is ironically cut off from easy access to areas of employment. This is especially true when rail traffic is stalled at all of the grade crossings leading into and out of the district. But as many of the Fifth Ward residents are completely dependent on public transportation, attention must be paid to making mobility readily available, accommodating, and well-identified. Bus transit will likely be the best option for the foreseeable future but the fact that light rail was



mentioned on more than one occasion needs to be registered, especially so as this mode of transportation was what once helped Lyons Avenue to prosper.

### **CATEGORY III: AMENITIES AND PROJECTS**

The items above are those around which lives are constructed. Those below speak to the larger issues of the Fifth Ward as a place commercial and cultural exchange. These are the intangibles that make a community attractive to visitors, to investors, and which help to redefine the terms of engagement with media stereotypes.

#### ***Recreation, Parks and Public Facilities***

Several residents interviewed commented on using public amenities such as parks and other sports facilities outside of the study area. There was also a desire to have more options for youth closer to home. The limited time available did not permit an in depth analysis of the available facilities and programs but their importance to the well being of the community cannot be overstated. In the past, it was sometimes the library that registered a strong sense of shared interest, something that might want to be revisited in a time of heightened media importance. Whatever they might be, the perceptions of such common and highly visible assets are critical to the identity and livability of the area.

#### ***Buy Local***

In many of our conversations, the topic of local retail options was broached. In some cases, dollars are leaving the community to be spent in other locations in spite of considerable travel times and complexities. Strategies for the relocation and/or

nurturing of more readily accessible vendors are very important for reasons of both employment as well as spending. It might also be important to understand the definition of “local” as there are clearly retail options just west of the study area that may seem out of reach for a number of reasons.

#### ***Signature Projects***

Several projects of significance have been proposed for the Fifth Ward, most prominent among them being the revival of the DeLuxe Theater and surrounding block. Another opportunity exists at the point of connection with Denver Harbor in the form of a cultural and technology center. There is indeed a need for catalytic projects serve to rebrand this major thoroughfare and to promote daily activity as well as special events. It is, however, important to confirm the program objectives first and not to consider such efforts simply as building projects.

#### ***Signature Events***

One of the best ways to change the perception of an area and introduce people in a welcoming manner is to develop a “must attend” regular event. Ideally this would be built around local history and authentic cultural heritage. The Fifth Ward had an enviable association with music, the arts, and political history. As Lyons Avenue is transformed, it would be worth considering annual or semi-annual events (possibly “First Friday’s”) that would transform the street into a festival culture, both past and present.

#### **CATEGORY IV: MOVE FORWARD, RESPECT THE PAST**

The overall message in this report is embedded in all of the suggestions and proposals and it is a simple one: the future of the Fifth Ward is not dependent on its past. This pertains to both the more uplifting pieces of history or personal triumph as well as the less than optimal perceptions of crime and safety. Change is not only possible...it is inevitable. Work to leverage it with the many available collaborators and partners.

##### ***Embrace Demographic Change***

The complexion of the United States has always been in flux and the present time is no different. The ethnic profile of cities and regions are destined to change given the increased mobility of populations. The Fifth Ward has a long history as an African American community that must be respected. So too must the potential new arrivals prepared to help contribute to the greater good. The work of the future will be about how to integrate long-standing residents and others seeking a comparable quality of life with different housing, commercial, transportation, and public facilities required to reposition the Fifth Ward in both perception and reality.

##### ***Elevate the Legacy of the Fifth Ward***

One cannot hear Barbara Jordan's speech on the floor of the 1976 National Democratic Convention and not think that her words are as relevant to us today as they were over three decades ago. The jazz, blues, and zydeco music that once emanated from venues along Lyons Avenue are extensions of a uniquely American cultural heritage. So too is the iconic photo of the Gold Medal winning heavyweight boxer George Foreman in the Mexico City Olympics. All of the above are part of the Fifth Ward heritage, a

heritage that some will find revelatory. How can these guideposts of civic leadership, the arts, and sport help to inspire others to believe in an equally compelling future?

##### ***Be Connected***

The pace of change in contemporary life is quite remarkable. This is true for those who are active participants in that dynamic and equally the case for those seemingly removed from it. Having the option of shaping the future is far preferable to being shaped by it. The Fifth Ward has literally been reshaped by the advance of technology, most significantly the automobile and the highways that have bisected the community on more than one occasion. Rather than being disconnected or cut off, it is time for the Fifth Ward to think about every opportunity for connection- with other communities, businesses, universities, foundations, corporations, technologies, and government leadership. Be connected; nothing could be more important for the future of the Fifth and should be the hallmark of all decision-making going forward.



## ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS



## Elements

The concepts prepared by the R/UDAT team cover a very wide range of topics and issues. The components have been organized into a series of topics, called “elements” to organize the thoughts. These elements include:

- **People: Housing Choice** - This element considers the people who live and will live in the community, considers important market conditions and trends, and contains specific recommendations in regards to future public and private investment in both affordable and market rate housing.
- **Economic Development** - This element describes how more shops, stores and services can be provided to help serve a great and growing neighborhood. It indicates key ideas concerning the role that education and the schools will play, and provides several thoughts about expanding employment opportunities.
- **Quality of Life: A Healthy Neighborhood** – This segment addresses other aspects of the quality of life in the neighborhood, ranging from the provision of community and health services, how the infrastructure needs to be improved, how access and mobility can be enhanced to connect the Fifth Ward to other parts of the city and region, and the role that open space and community gardens play in a healthy neighborhood.
- **Places: Urban Design of a Community** – This element describes how the buildings, streets, places and amenities can be arranged to fulfill the overall vision that is contained in this document.
- **Brand Strategy** - The final element addresses the character of the neighborhood, and how the past can be linked to the future and how the image – the “brand” of the neighborhood - can be transformed as part of the revitalization process.

## HOUSING CHOICE

### Existing Conditions – Residential

For the purposes of this report, the R/UDAT team focused on the Lyons Avenue sub-district of the greater Fifth Ward neighborhood, an area bounded by Jensen, I-10, the Rail lines along Harriman Street and near Lockwood Drive. After years of declining population, loss of income diversity and various levels of neglect and disinvestment, the Fifth Ward neighborhood is experiencing severe physical distress. Within the narrow Lyons Avenue sub-district, as of 2012, there are over 550 vacant house lots; and over 125 physically distressed and tax delinquent houses (this is based on an R/UDAT team count of vacant house lots and severely tax delinquent properties. Unless noted otherwise, all data cited is from TIRZ’s Fifth Ward Housing Study, November 2011).



Within this area there are a number of bright spots, including the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation's (CRC) development of the Pleasant Hills affordable housing development. However, the area is in significant need of a coordinated redevelopment effort involving the City, Fifth Ward CRC and other non-profit partners.



### Population and Demographics

The Fifth Ward is located in the center of the Houston region, whose 2009 population of 5.766 million is expected to grow by over 20% between 2010 and 2020.

The R/UDAT project area is focused on the northern half of the greater Fifth Ward, which is bisected by I-10 and extends southward to the Buffalo Bayou. The demographic and economic information available for the greater Fifth Ward provides a helpful resource and helps set the context for planning.

The greater Fifth Ward Study area contains 47,000 people and 15,000 households. The Fifth Ward population declined in every census through the years from 1980 through 2000. However, in the years since 2000, it has begun to grow again, recording a 1.8% growth rate between 2000 and 2009. This is positive, but a much lower rate than the overall region.

The Fifth Ward is projected to grow at a rate of approximately 4% in the next five years. and extrapolating further ahead from the study, nearly 9% over the next 10 years. If the Fifth Ward grows as Houston has grown, 3,000 new households will migrate to the Fifth Ward in the next 10 years.

The demographic data suggests that there has been a marked increase in the representation of Latinos in the district; most recently, the population has gone from 43% to less than 54%.

Fifth Ward household income is \$22,237 and represents about half of the Houston median income of \$43,365. At this rate, the median income of \$34,365 would represent 80% of area AMI with \$26,019 representing 60% AMI. Assuming these rates are accurate, LIHTC-financed housing could serve the large majority of current Fifth Ward residents.

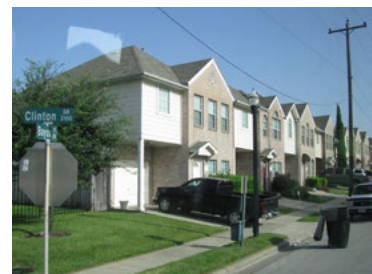
The community also has a relatively low level of educational attainment with 82% of the local population having attainment of High School / GED or lower, of which 57% have less than a HS or GED degree.

The demographics summary suggests that the Fifth Ward is a historic but poor neighborhood experiencing significant demographic change: it is becoming both more diverse, (specifically Latino) and younger.

This data also suggests that with population and household growth, demand for housing in Houston is high and is likely to remain high over the coming 5-10 years. If the district grows as the rest of the Houston region grows, or at the projected 9% over the next 10 years, the greater Fifth Ward could grow by 3,000 households between 2010-2020, creating a significant increase in new residents and possibly new housing development opportunities.

## **Trends for Market and Affordable Residential Development**

### ***Market Development***



Evidence suggests that the viability of the Fifth Ward as a place for housing development has increased significantly in the last 10 years. While the recession slowed this trend in recent years, the greater Fifth Ward had 471 permits issued between 2004 and 2009, experiencing a spike in permit activity with 132 in 2005. The greater Fifth Ward also had 610 existing home sales from 2004-2010, representing an average of 100 sales per year.

The Fifth Ward Housing Study cites the development of a number of new, single and multifamily developments in the Lower Frenchtown section of the greater Fifth Ward. Lower Frenchtown has been a focus of development and sales activity within the Ward. This sub-market has absorbed 124 sales in the last 6 years at an average of \$187,000 per unit. This figure is well over the \$150,000 average sales price for Houston and the \$30,000 sales price realized in the Lyons Avenue during the same period.

From visual inspection and a review of data from the Fifth Ward Housing Study, this area has had the development of approximately 40 new patio townhomes developed by New Citi and Lanterra Homes, which have performed well in terms of sales over the last eight years with a majority of sales over \$200,000 per unit.



The Fifth Ward Housing Study included analysis of single family housing development economics which indicated that even at the slightly higher cost that may come with incorporating higher design standards, new, single family residential projects are likely financially feasible.

If the for-sale market returns is as expected in the coming years, it is expected that the development interest from Lower French Town could begin to bring developer, buyer and renter interest into the Lyons Avenue sub-district.

### ***Affordable Housing Development***

On the affordable housing side, the Lyons Avenue sub-district still has a significant number of severely deteriorated houses: using severe tax delinquency as a metric, the area has 133+ houses on the long term delinquency list. This is in addition to the 550 vacant house lots in the Lyons Avenue area. Using the Houston Hope data from the Kinder Institute, which covers an area approximate to the Lyons Avenue area as an example, 64% (2,470) of the households are HH renters. Given the lack of multifamily developments in this area, it is a fair assumption that a significant number (2,000+) of these households are renting single-family, detached homes. These households are at particular risk of displacement in the event of significant development pressure, which may result in fast turnover of housing units in the neighborhood. To ensure improved living conditions and more stability in the housing status of current Fifth Ward residents, we believe additional affordable housing units are warranted.

To demonstrate basic feasibility, the team reviewed the State of Texas QAP and likely costs for multifamily development. On the basis of this review, we believe that new LIHTC-financed development product is feasible in the Lyons Avenue sub-district and certainly the larger Fifth Ward Area. The primary threat to this feasibility is the lack of access to 9% tax credit equity allocations from the State of Texas, which has become less certain due to the fair housing lawsuit pending against the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, as well as the high volume and quality of competition for the credits. However, the 4% LIHTC equity is non-competitive and much more available; the viability threat for these credits is non-LIHTC capital gaps that come from using 4% credits on projects which are better suited for the deeper subsidy allowed by 9% tax credits.

## **Recommendations and Implementation Strategy**

### ***Recommended Program***

Building on the interest of the 3,000 households that may come to the Fifth Ward over the next ten years, we believe significant new, single-family, and multifamily rental apartment units could be developed and absorbed in the greater Fifth Ward Area. More to the point, we project that within the Lyons Avenue area over a 5-7 year period, approximately 700 units could be built or redeveloped, and absorbed. By way of example and to illustrate precedent, 610 units were absorbed in the greater Fifth Ward 2004-2010 (100 per year). Further, according to the study, 250 multifamily units (50 per year) are projected to be developed between 2016 and 2020.

We believe that of these 750 recommended units, approximately 500 should be multi-family mixed income units needed to begin replacement of the existing, severely distressed single family homes that are used as rental units in the market. These units could be developed through larger, mixed-income multifamily developments in key areas within the Lyons Avenue corridor in properties such as:

- Properties in the Jensen Street and Lyons Avenue area
- Properties at the Corner of Lyons and Worms Street, among other properties

These developments could be implemented by development partners like the Houston Housing Authority (HHA), Fifth Ward CRC, New Hope CDC or other organizations with capacity in the community. It is hoped that these developments could be part of larger, mixed-income and or mixed-use developments on these sites.

The remaining 250 units are expected to come from redevelopment of vacant or deteriorated, detached single-family homes within the Lyons Avenue area or through redevelopment of vacant house lots. The properties for development would come from the smaller owners of single family houses, or house lots; or from bulk owners of such properties. Owners like Parra Engineering or their assignees, or other large land holders would be the redevelopers of the properties.

### ***Implementation Strategy***

The implementation of this strategy is greatly aided by the potential access to the US HUD Community Development Block Grant allocation the State of Texas received

for Hurricane Ike Disaster Recovery Program. The funding has been granted to the State of Texas General Land Office, and the share allocated to Houston is estimated to be approximately \$150 million. \$30 million of this funding is to be dedicated to the Houston Housing Authority (HHA) with the remainder to be allocated to the City of Houston Community Development Department.

At this time, the path to allocation of this funding is becoming clearer but is subject to a multiparty negotiation among the State, US HUD, the City of Houston and the plaintiffs in a pending lawsuit about allocation of the funding to Houston. Although a resolution is expected soon, it will likely leave a narrow time window for deployment of the funding.

Assuming the funding path is cleared, the implementation of these development recommendations presents a number of challenges. First and foremost, the effort is challenged by the volume of small house lots, which must be assembled to develop new housing. In addition to this challenge, finding stewards of the effort to help with implementation and identifying approaches which allow prompt, responsible expenditure of the funding are also important.

As many states and municipalities learned from administering the Neighborhood Stabilization Programs 1-3 (NSP), government lacks the agility to assemble sites adequate for larger developments, or even smaller infill properties when and where desired. However, leaving these properties to the market unregulated is unlikely to

yield the volume or quality of the results the City, Fifth Ward CRC or the community desire. In other contexts, communities would use zoning to set developer expectations. Houston however, has a different system which requires a creative approach.

To respond to these challenges, the R/UDAT team is recommending a multi-faceted approach which has been successful in solving these challenges in other jurisdictions. We recommend that the city use a portion of the US HUD CDBG allocation for Hurricane Ike Disaster Recovery rebuilding efforts to create an “Incentive Fund”. The fund would finance the following activities with a focus on the Lyons Avenue sub-district of the Fifth Ward and beyond:

1. Preserve Existing Affordable Multi-Family Housing: Use the funding as a bridge loan to invest in shovel-ready projects to preserve at-risk affordable housing in the target area. Part of this resource can return to the lender as program income when the 4% tax credit equity comes in to take out portions of the bridge loan. This approach can use the funding quickly and keep the resources in Houston for the long term.
2. Invest in New Multifamily housing. Use a portion of the fund to undertake two activities:
  - o Acquisition and Pre-Development Fund: Invest recoverable grants as acquisition and pre-development capital into ventures which will redevelop new mixed-income developments in the Lyons Avenue area.
  - o 4% Tax Credit Gap Equity: Use the funding to create an equity fund to allow full use of the 4% tax credit equity that is plentiful and non-competitive, closing capital gaps on projects that have until now relied on 9% credits for funding.
3. Stabilization Loan Fund: Use a portion of the proceeds to invest in acquisition, new construction/redevelopment and rehabilitation of Lyons Avenue area house lot parcels with grant sources, making them more feasible on a near

term basis. The funding would be targeted at owners of “bulk” portfolios of Fifth Ward houses and house lots, giving them incentives to come forward and realize subsidy on parcels. It would allow pre-qualified developers to access the resources on properties they assemble. In exchange, they would accept some deed restrictions requiring affordability on some portion of their portfolio, sustainable design and a design vocabulary for builders to encourage orderly, appealing redevelopment.

4. Land Bank: Use a portion of the funding to support a new land bank or expand an existing land bank which could assemble, control and most importantly manage vacant house lots for the community. As parcels become available and can be contributed to development efforts, the land bank can bring them into transaction. In the interim, the resources can be leveraged to attract matching resources which can pay for property maintenance and care, potentially converting land to interim landscape uses (pocket parks, community gardens).

In all these instances, with the underwriting of the grants for these housing ventures, the Incentive Fund will add deed restrictions that require a level of long term affordability for a threshold level of units, the adherence to sustainable design principles, and use of a “pattern” book of high quality design approaches, which will reinforce quality in design and execution of the redevelopment. Although many of the circumstances are very different as described below, the fundamental concept has been to create a source of subsidy funds to meet the need for work force housing in target areas that are chosen because of the broader community benefits that occur. The use of the funds is then tied to specific criteria to ensure that they are well designed and strategically located.

Precedent for this approach can be found in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which has a Smart Growth Overlay District (40R) program that has elements appropriate and adaptable to the mission to redevelop the Lyons Avenue area of the Fifth Ward.

The lack of supply of appropriately zoned land in suburban Boston has begun to impact the ability of developers to produce new housing. This, in turn, has allowed the price of non-income restricted housing to rise to a point where working families above the subsidy thresholds cannot afford to live in communities. Communities have been resistant because they fear of the cost of additional school children and related mitigation costs.

To solve this problem, through 40R the Commonwealth enters into agreements to municipalities to pay communities up to \$700,000 for zoned land and \$5,000 per unit for each unit produced. In exchange for the financing, the municipalities and developers agree to accept a greater level of sustainability and transit orientation among other requirements.

Another applicable program is the Neighborhood Stabilization Loan Fund (NSLF) program operated by the Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation (MHIC). In this case the Commonwealth, lenders and philanthropic investors contributed funding to the NSLF a specific underwriting approach, provided subsidy to a set of pre-qualified developers who were redeveloping foreclosed housing units into rental

housing. The NSLF has redeveloped over 300 units in the first 18 months: if a similar fund is successful at doing this on a similar scale for the Fifth Ward, it would have a major impact.

### ***Infrastructure***

The R/UDAT team also recommends that the City of Houston Public Works Department, which has applied separately for CDBG Hurricane Ike Disaster Recovery Funds, allocate funding to the Fifth Ward on a high-priority basis both immediately and in concert with development proposed under the Incentive Fund. Many important residential streets in the Fifth Ward have been long been neglected and many streets are without sidewalks and have drainage systems consistent with rural areas.

### ***Stewardship***

A final component of the implementation strategy is the stewardship of the Incentive Fund resources and tasks. For each of the first three proposed activities: 1) Preserving Existing Affordable Multi-Family Housing; 2) Investing in New Multifamily Housing (including Acquisition; Predevelopment; 4% LIHTC Equity); and 3) the Stabilization Loan Fund, we recommend that a financial intermediary with significant local experience that has City of Houston and CDC, or other non-profit board involvement should be allocated the stewardship of the Incentive Fund. Candidate organizations include the Houston Housing Finance Corporation, LISC or similar non-profit lending organizations. One or more lenders could also identify ways to pool risk and fund



management. The intermediary could also market lending products that work with the recoverable grant sources recommended.

For the land bank, we recommend that the TIRZ #18 take on this responsibility. The Board of the TIRZ and the Fifth Ward CRC have the capacity to manage the acquisition and infill development roles and can act as a managing steward of the land as well. It will be important to make sure that the land bank is adequately resourced to not only acquire properties but also develop and execute a land management strategy that allows the properties to be more attractive and landscaped.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

Economic Development is important to the Fifth Ward both from the standpoint of creating opportunity for existing residents, as well as creating amenities and improving the quality of life for old timers and newcomers alike. This section primarily covers opportunities to increase the availability of goods and services in the target area, which will have the additional benefit of creating new jobs. It also addresses the important role of education in the community, and how the ongoing renewal of the community can help create badly needed jobs for local residents low educational attainment.

### **Shops, Stores and Services**

#### ***Overview***

Lyons Avenue is the historic Main Street and civic spine of the Fifth Ward. Following the evisceration of the neighborhood by large freeways and the subsequent 50 years of decline and disinvestment, what was once a proud center for African American commerce and culture is gone in all but memory. In its place is an entirely new physical and social geography that must be recognized if retail and services are ever to become abundant in the neighborhood again. Because of the limited spending power of the current households, in the near term effective efforts will be confined to working to improve and leverage existing assets. In the longer term, there is a significant opportunity to bring larger format destination retail near to the historic 100 percent corner of Lyons and Jenson, bringing the history of commerce in the Fifth Ward full circle.

#### ***The Rise and Fall of the Lyons Main Street***

The Great Fire of 1912 was a major setback for the Fifth Ward, yet set the stage for the growth of a classic pre-war main street commercial environment on Lyons and Jenson Street. Prior to the construction of Highway 59, this area was fully connected into the neighborhood fabric and on the cusp of Houston's urban core, and spanned the area from Jenson to Gregg Street, both important north-south arterials. A streetcar carried commuters and shoppers to and from the Fifth Ward to downtown. Businesses catered to the African American residents in the surrounding area, and at night the area pulsed with music and nightlife.

The construction of Highway 59 destroyed in one swoop about a third of the commercial core and created an imposing barrier between the remaining business and the bulk of the residential areas that provided the patrons. The next few decades of population loss, disinvestment and building demolition finished the job started by the freeway construction. With the exception of the DeLuxe Theater and two remaining storefronts, absolutely nothing remains of what was once a thriving commercial corridor.

In its place is an entirely new geography. Lyons Avenue remains an important spine in the neighborhood, but from a transportation standpoint it is completely eclipsed by the massive Katy Freeway (I-10) to the south. As a low-traffic, two-lane street, it is completely off the radar for most national retailers. The most important cross streets are those that provide access north, across the rail tracks; south, across I-10; and which

provide an interchange with I-10. There are three such roadways: Lockwood, Waco and 59. Of the three, Lockwood has attracted the most commercial development, with a full complement of convenience retail and services located at the corner with Lyons or nearby. The intersection of Waco and Lyons is primarily residential with some services. The interchange of 59 and Lyons, on the other hand, is potentially an amazing location for a new retail destination, located just outside of downtown, at the convergence of two busy freeways, and featuring abundant vacant and underutilized land. In between, the area near the DeLuxe is best suited to providing gathering places and quality of life amenities, rather than being a shopping destination.



*Road network and potential commercial opportunity areas*

## **Current Market Conditions**

### **Demand Factors**

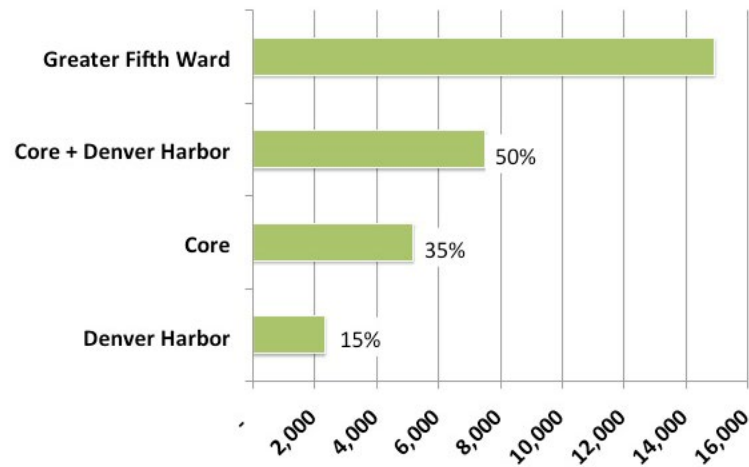
The demand for retail is created by household spending. In the community meetings, grocery stores were the most mentioned retail category. This report takes a detailed look at the demand for grocery stores specifically, but a similar analysis could be done for other retail categories, and would likely lead to similar results. The demographics are drawn from the recently completed Fifth Ward Housing Study.



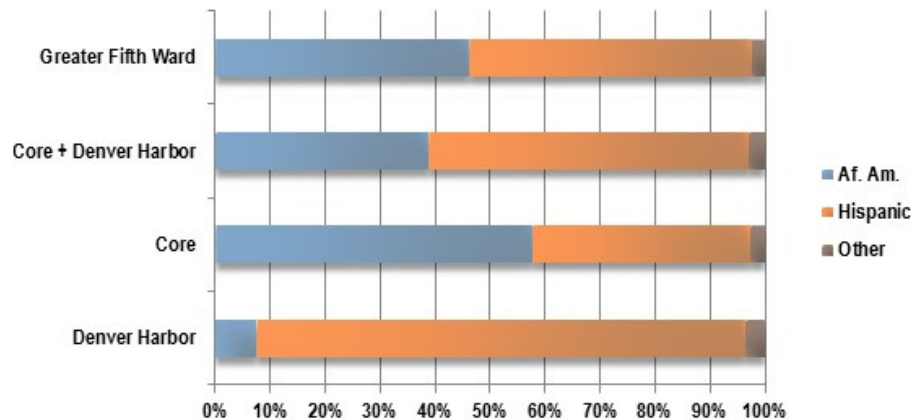
*Fifth Ward Housing Study area and sub areas*

Within the Housing Study area are approximately 15,000 households, of which 51 percent are Hispanic and 46 percent are African-American. However, only about half of these households live in the area south of the railroad, where this study is focused; and of these, about a third are in the predominately Hispanic neighborhood

of Denver Harbor. Excluding Denver Harbor, the study area population is majority African American. With Denver Harbor included, the Hispanic population, which have larger households hence more household spending, is predominate. Retail does not respect neighborhood boundaries, and it is therefore little wonder that much of the retail in the neighborhood has assumed a Hispanic flair.



*Households by Sub Area (Sources: The Fifth Ward Study Area; R/UDAT Team calculations.)*



*Ethnic Mix by Sub Area (Sources: The Fifth Ward Study Area; R/UDAT Team calculations.)*

The following table presents the calculations showing that there is about \$44 million in demand for food at home within the Housing Study area. However, the demand within the target area is only about half of that, at \$22 million, since only half the households live there.

	Households	Spending/ Household	Total Spending (millions)
<b>Less than \$15,000</b>	5,615	\$2,157	\$12
<b>\$15,000 to \$24,999</b>	2,555	\$2,664	\$7
<b>\$25,000 to \$34,999</b>	1,899	\$3,036	\$6
<b>\$35,000 to \$49,999</b>	1,973	\$3,393	\$7
<b>\$50,000 to \$74,999</b>	1,685	\$3,690	\$6
<b>\$75,000 and above</b>	1,201	\$5,122	\$6
<b>Total</b>	14,928		\$44

*Fifth Ward Spending Power for Groceries (Sources: The Fifth Ward Study Area; Consumer Expenditure Survey; R/UDAT Team calculations.)*

According to the Food Marketing Institute, a trade organization for supermarkets, the average performance of a supermarket in the U.S. is about \$600 in sales per square foot of selling space per year. Dividing this figure into the \$22 million in spending power yields a demand for 37,000 square feet of grocery store space, about the size of one full line supermarket. Note that this demand calculation aggregates together the spending of both African American and Hispanic households. With the neighborhood split between these two populations, the implication is clear: a quality supermarket can only be supported if both communities shop at the same place. As



will be discussed in the next section, one of these communities already has a quality supermarket. The other one does too, but has been reluctant to recognize this fact.

### ***Supply Analysis***

Food shoppers in the target area have two options. At Lyons and Gregg is a small supermarket of approximately 7,000 square feet, about the size of a particularly large convenience store. This market has a limited produce and meat selection that is of poor quality, and does not carry a full line of goods. The interior ambience is similar to a large roadside convenience store. Prices are expensive: on the R/UDAT team's site visit, a gallon of whole milk cost \$4.99.

At the other end of the study area is the Fiesta, a full line supermarket of approximately 32,000 square feet. In spite of the Hispanic branding, food items for all tastes can be found within its walls. The produce section is clean, comprehensive, and well stocked. There are counters for fresh fish and meat. Staples are available in bulk quantities at low prices. Visited by the team the same day as the Lyon's Supermarket, a gallon of whole milk could be purchased for \$3.79, a savings of 24 percent.

Together, these two markets more than satisfy the estimated demand for food stores within the study area. There is no room for a new supermarket without identifying new sources of demand. Yet, participants in the R/UDAT workshops repeatedly rejected the Fiesta as a viable shopping option for the African American population living west of the railroad tracks.

The shopping area around the Fiesta is a mix of local, regional and national chains that cater to a lower-income demographic. They include Fallas Peredes, an apparel retailer specializing in overstocks; Melrose Family Stores, another apparel retailer; Radio Shack; Rent A Center; and Auto Zone. In the same way that the Fiesta mostly accounts for the local demand for grocery stores, a similar analysis indicates that the local demand for apparel would support about 22,000 square feet, similar to what exists in the Melrose and Fallas Peredes stores.



*Produce in the Fiesta supermarket*

### ***Conclusions***

Without minimizing the cultural identify barriers that exist between the Denver Harbor area (where these stores are located) and the rest of the target area, the easiest and more effective way to increase the access to goods and services in the Fifth Ward

is to improve and expand this existing business node. It is in a viable location, at the corner of Lyons and Lockwood, an important north-south corridor; it already has successful tenants on which to build; and it well served by transit, being adjacent to a new bus transfer facility. The alternative, which is to create a separate convenience retail node further west, is not viable due to both a lack of demand and a shortage of suitable sites capable of accommodating retail development.

A bridge is needed over the tracks—a bridge which is more cultural than physical, although the redevelopment of the welding shop on Lyons between Sakowitz and the tracks would help knit the area together. Potential actions include reaching out to the Fiesta store management regarding specific items important to the African American community that are not currently stocked, and the creation of a weekend shopping shuttle to bring customers to the store from the west.

### **Commercial Revitalization Vision**

The vision for commerce on Lyons Avenue is based on three observations:

1. Limited local spending power means that significant new neighborhood-serving retail is not viable at this time, and sustaining quality retail requires that both African Americans and Hispanics shop in the same places. Notwithstanding its location in Denver Harbor, the existing retail node east of Lyons is the best place to satisfy local neighborhood needs.

2. For reasons of cultural memory and community pride, a social gathering place is still needed within the heart of the community, not on its edge. The location centered on the rehabilitated DeLuxe Theater is the right place to satisfy this need.

3. Transformative retail requires a site that can tap into a much larger trade area. The interchange of Lyons and 59 offers great regional access, and there is ample land sitting fallow to accommodate a large-format concept and still have room left for a mix of uses to create additional vibrancy.

### ***Convenience Retail in Denver Harbor***

As noted above, this retail node, for better or worse, already contains enough retail space to satisfy two basic needs of the neighborhood—groceries and clothing. The problems with this area, both real and perceived, are (1) that is on the edge of the neighborhood, not in its center; and (2) it caters too overtly to the Hispanic market and is not as welcoming to African American customers. A third point is that the quality of the retail is likely not what the community truly desires. Unfortunately, higher quality retail will necessarily await the arrival of a significant number of higher income residents into the area.

Improving this retail node will require both physical and marketing improvements. The area, like most parts of Fifth Ward, would benefit from upgraded sidewalks, pavement, landscaping and lighting—the basics of a good public realm. The redevelopment of

the welding shop site would increase the critical mass of retail at this location, and also would knit the area together to form a more cohesive shopping destination.

Outreach to the major retailers should also be undertaken to encourage them to adjust their merchandising and marketing to appear more to African American customers. They have a clear financial reason to do so—if they do not adequately serve this key market segment, they will be leaving considerable money on the table. To improve access to food for the elderly and other limited-mobility populations, a partnership with the Fiesta management on a weekend shopping shuttle bus should be explored.

### ***Social and Experiential Retail at the DeLuxe***

The DeLuxe Theater and its attached storefronts are the very last remnants of what was once a vibrant commercial center. Adjacent is the justly maligned Lyon's Supermarket. Across Lyons is a mixed-use apartment development that was an early project of the Fifth Ward CRC. It has ground floor spaces mostly occupied by offices and service providers, but also usable for certain retail uses. Also in the area is the HP Carter Career Center, a special High School that occupies a portion of a historic school site. On the corner is an unappealing liquor store.

Funding to restore the DeLuxe is already secured. The success of this venture will require improvements to the surrounding area to create vibrancy. An inexpensive place to start would be to create a neighborhood hangout spot in one of the CRC development's ground floor spaces. A coffee shop could be such a use. It requires

little in the way of investment—no ventilator or grease trap, for instance—and would serve as an informal gathering place for the community.



***Potential storefronts in Lyons Village.***

Another way to jump start activity in this area is through the use of temporary “pop-up” food and crafts for special events. Simple ideas include closing the street and inviting in food trucks and carts, vegetable stands selling produce from the local community gardens, and tables and tents for local arts and crafts. These block parties could be help in the run-up to the reopening of the DeLuxe to generate buzz and excitement.

The existing supermarket is not an asset. The CRC has already assembled the entire block, and may want to complete the job by acquiring the supermarket building.



Becoming the landlord would give the CRC leverage to either improve the existing operation, or to terminate the lease and attract a new tenant to this space that would be a better fit for the location.

The HP Carter High School site is only partially in use. The redevelopment of a portion of this site for housing would create additional vibrancy and safety by adding new residents (i.e. customers) and eyes on the street. Since the site is publicly owned and off the tax roles, adding new tax-paying uses would also generate pure increment for the TIRZ, helping to fund the infrastructure improvements in the area.

Badly needed physical improvements include upgraded sidewalks and new pedestrian-scaled street lighting. The plaza in front of the theater should be warm and inviting. While land has been acquired to provide parking for the theater to the rear, on main streets off-street parking is not nearly as valuable as curb parking. The existing bike lane on Lyons appears to be little used, and is often blocked by illegally parked cars. The community should explore restoring curb parking to Lyons in key locations where there is the potential to capture economic value.

### ***Destination Retail at the 100 Percent Corner***

The old 100 percent corner in the community was Lyons and Jenson. In the auto age, the new 100 percent corner is 59 and I-10. Capturing the value of the interchange of these two freeways will occur primarily in one quadrant, and the most appropriate quadrant is coincidentally the one that houses the historic corner that once was the

heart of the community. If successful, retail development in this location will bring the community full circle.

The ability to establish site control and offer economic development incentives will be critical to landing a major facility in this location, but the potential upside is significant. For example, a 380 Agreement to bring WalMart to a site in the Heights on Yale Street was recently scuttled by community opposition. Would they be interested in this location as an alternative, with a growing demographic, highly visible location, and proximity to downtown? Such a large retailer would bring a significant number of jobs to the community as well as shopping. Job training and placement providers should be at the ready to help move local residents in need of jobs into employment opportunities, and could be incorporated into any future 380 agreement.

In the long term, single-use, suburban-style retail development is not the highest and best use for this area. The public incentives offered should be leveraged to work with any tenant that lands in this area to create a site layout that lends itself to infill with mixed-use development over time. Shared parking can be a key part of this strategy, as commercial uses have their peak demand in the day, compared with residential which peaks at night. Reducing the land area devoted to parking helps create a more transit- and pedestrian-friendly development pattern. And while the nearby residents will be a small part of the trade area population, they will have an outsized impact on the viability of retail by virtue of their frequent patronage.

## SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION

The Fifth Ward is primarily residential, and quality schools are the backbone of any residential community. Further, education is the most important gateway to a future of employment. The Fifth Ward is fortunate to have a large number of schools within its borders, several of which have either been recently rehabilitated or have refurbishing projects underway.

### Schools in the Lower Fifth Ward

	Accountability Rating	Per-Pupil Spending	Total Enrollment	% Economically Disadvantaged Students	Attendance
<b>Elementary Schools</b>					
Atherton	Academically Acceptable	\$9,175	342	98.2	97.3
Bruce	Recognized	\$7,765	599	96.3	96.5
Crawford	Recognized	\$8,894	243	97.1	96.8
Eliot	Recognized	\$7,071	550	97.5	96.7
Henderson	Recognized	\$8,550	349	100	96.9
Pugh	Recognized	\$6,335	522	96.2	97.2
<b>Middle</b>					
Smith Education Center	Academically Unacceptable	\$12,020	241	93.1	95
McReynolds	Academically Acceptable	\$8,537	646	95	94.6
<b>High</b>					
Wheatley	Academically Unacceptable	\$9,289	1,070	89.6	83.5
<b>Charter</b>					
Pleasant Hill Elementary	Data not available	--	75*	--	--
HP Carter Career Center	Data not available	--	98*	--	--

Source: Fifth Ward Housing Study; Children at Risk 2012; \*texas.webschoolpro.com.

As shown in the table, most schools within the target area are either recognized for their academic quality or academically acceptable, in spite of every school having well over 90 percent of its student body coming from an economically disadvantaged background. Two outliers stand out. Wheatley High School, the only high school in the area, is rated academically unacceptable. It has low attendance rates and a low graduation rate of only 57.5 percent. The second lagging schools is the Smith Education Center, which is also the school that receives by far the most lavish spending per student.

There are two charter schools in the target area. Performance statistics for these schools were not available for this report, but the HP Carter Career Center has about 75 students, based on information from the website [texas.webschoolpro.com](http://texas.webschoolpro.com). This school occupies facility much larger than is necessary for this number of students, providing the opportunity for other uses or services to be provided on the same site. Pleasant Hill Academy has an enrollment of about a hundred students, according to the same web source.

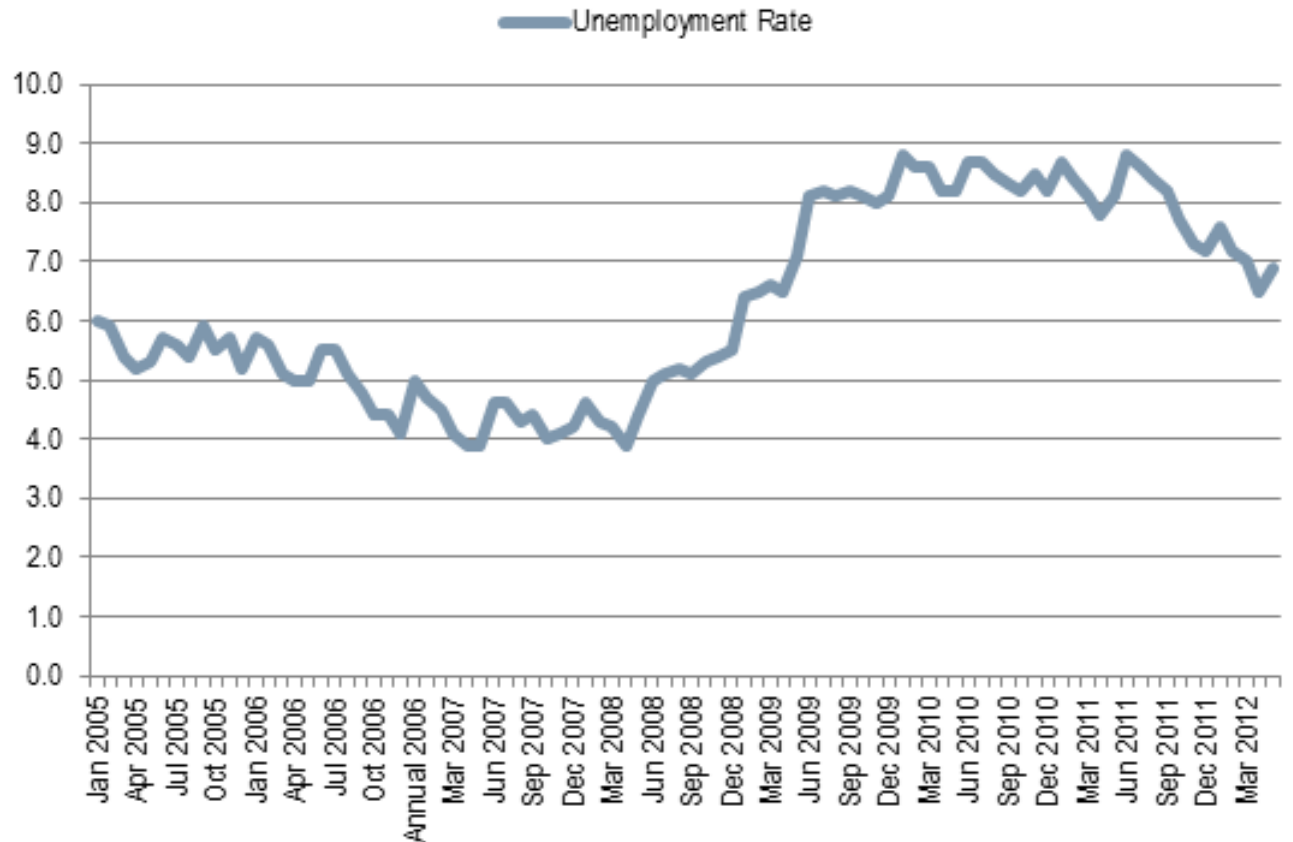
In general, there are a significant number of schools in the study area, and school are on balance an asset for the community. However, the situation and Wheatley is troubling, as a high school diploma is the minimum gateway to future success in a world that is increasingly requiring solid analytical, computer and communication skills for even basic jobs. Improving the academics and graduation rate an Wheatley must be a top priority for the community.

## Jobs and Opportunity

The Houston economy has remained resilient in the face of the worst economic downturn since the great depression. The metro-area unemployment rate has showed sustained improvement since the summer of 2011 and is lower than the national rate, although still remains nearly three percentage points higher than its 2008 nadir of 4 percent.

Houston's economy differs from the national norm in three key respects. First, it is a center of the oil and gas extraction industry and has been since the time that Texas was the largest oil-producing region in the world. Second, the City's incredible and sustained population growth means that real estate and construction are a more significant share of employment, as the City is constantly building to accommodate an expanding population. Lastly, with its port, extensive rail freight infrastructure, and highway systems, Houston is a center for good distribution and transshipment.

## Houston Metro Unemployment Rate





Industry Sector	Share of National Employment	Share of Houston Metro Employment
NAICS 722 Food services and drinking places	8.86%	8.97%
NAICS 621 Ambulatory health care services	5.67%	5.84%
NAICS 238 Specialty trade contractors	3.18%	3.88%
NAICS 423 Merchant wholesalers, durable goods	2.55%	3.66%
NAICS 622 Hospitals	4.32%	3.37%
NAICS 452 General merchandise stores	2.86%	2.77%
NAICS 445 Food and beverage stores	2.61%	2.55%
NAICS 332 Fabricated metal product manufacturing	1.24%	2.29%
NAICS 211 Oil and gas extraction	0.16%	2.25%
NAICS 333 Machinery manufacturing	0.97%	2.19%
NAICS 236 Construction of buildings	1.12%	2.16%
NAICS 522 Credit intermediation and related activities	2.36%	1.93%
NAICS 237 Heavy and civil engineering construction	0.76%	1.83%
NAICS 213 Support activities for mining	0.32%	1.78%
NAICS 611 Educational services	2.34%	1.64%
NAICS 531 Real estate	1.28%	1.56%
NAICS 325 Chemical manufacturing	0.72%	1.55%
NAICS 624 Social assistance	2.33%	1.39%
NAICS 448 Clothing and clothing accessories stores	1.25%	1.37%
NAICS 623 Nursing and residential care facilities	2.92%	1.33%

*Top 20 Industry Sectors by Share of Houston Metro Employment*

According to the Fifth Ward Housing study, jobs in the Fifth Ward outnumber employed residents by a factor of 1.6 to one. Part of this is likely due to locally high unemployment and lower than average labor force participation, and the other part is due to people commuting from outside of the area to work. Although no industry breakdown for the Fifth Ward is available, the land use pattern suggests that the largest number of jobs are industrial in nature, followed by education, with retail and service employment significantly lagging. The greatest potential for future job growth would likely be in the retail and service sectors, if a major new development can be brought to the area; and in the construction trades, as the Fifth Ward continues to redevelop, particularly south of I-10 in the Buffalo Bayou area.

Moving more Fifth Ward residents into work requires two strategies. One is job readiness—a focus on both hard and soft skills needed to succeed in the workplace. This is a critical issue in a community where well over half the adult population lacks a high school degree or the equivalent. The second is job access—giving local residents greater access to opportunities in the regional job market. For people with cars, this is not a problem, but for the transit-dependent, opportunity is heavily dependent on the ability to get to work on time using the bus system. For this reason, the community should always be advocating for improved bus service.

The CRC is already active in providing job training and workforce development services. One potential additional avenue to pursue, consistent with its development focus, is to incorporate training in the construction trades into its ongoing activities

to develop and rehabilitate property. In the booming Houston construction market, demand for trades such as licensed electricians is likely to continue to remain steady or growing. Such jobs can provide good sources of employment for populations that, like the Fifth Ward's, have low levels of educational attainment.

## **QUALITY OF LIFE: A HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD**

While individual health is a complex topic, the basics of a healthy place are simple and include access to fresh, quality food; available health care; clean air and water; freedom from disease-carrying animals and pests; and the ability to get outdoors and exercise. Communities that meet these criteria also tend to offer a high quality of life. The Fifth Ward unfortunately falls down on many of these scores, but it is making substantial progress.

### **Community and Health Services**

Access to health care close to home is important for all residents, but especially the elderly and infirm who don't have cars and would otherwise have to suffer a long bus ride. In many disadvantaged communities, health services are accessed only infrequently or for emergencies, when regular checkups and counseling would make a big difference in long term health outcomes. Making healthcare accessible and convenient is a key strategy for building healthy communities.

The Lyons Avenue Health Center, a service provided by the Houston Department of Health and Human Services, is located adjacent to the transit center on Lockwood. This facility provides basic health services to the neighborhood. Fifth Ward CRC is partnering with Duke and Rice Universities to develop a new health facility in the target area. This new facility can be a more intimate part of day to day healthy living, by providing promoting awareness and providing counseling on lifestyle, diet, exercise, and other healthy living basics.

## **Infrastructure for a Healthy Neighborhood**

City infrastructure carries clean water into homes and businesses; transports away wastewater and stormwater; and provides transportation networks for vehicles, transit riders, cyclists and pedestrians. The two biggest infrastructure needs in the Fifth Ward area are sidewalks and stormwater drainage. Sidewalks are discussed in the next section. Stormwater is discussed below.

The extensive use of drainage swales, or ditches, to handle street runoff, rather than curb and gutter, is the most pressing infrastructure problem in the area. These swales tend to collect trash and other obstructions, and if not properly maintained, soon fill with overgrown vegetation. In this state, standing water can persist for days after a rain, providing a prime breeding ground for Houston's famous mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes in a densely populated urban setting can pose a clear health hazard. According to the Houston Department of Health and Human Services, mosquitos carry diseases known as arboviruses. The most common in the Houston area are St. Louis encephalitis (SLE) virus and the West Nile encephalomyelitis (WNV) virus. HDHHS also notes on their website that "Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing or slow-moving water, like ditches or storm water basins that do not drain. Unattended weeds, tall grass and bushes provide adult mosquitoes with hiding places during the day." Many people who are infected do not realize it, yet suffer from symptoms such as fever, headache, fatigue, dizziness, weakness and confusion.

So extensive is the current system of swales and ditches that it will require years and many millions of dollars to replace this substandard infrastructure with curb and gutter. A reasonable strategy for moving forward should include: 1) the provision of curb and gutter on the part of any new development that results in the development of an entire blockface; 2) a capital program focused on installing property stormwater infrastructure and sidewalks in priority locations to be identified by the community; and; 3) community education on the importance of maintaining the ditches that remain free of obstructions and overgrown vegetation.

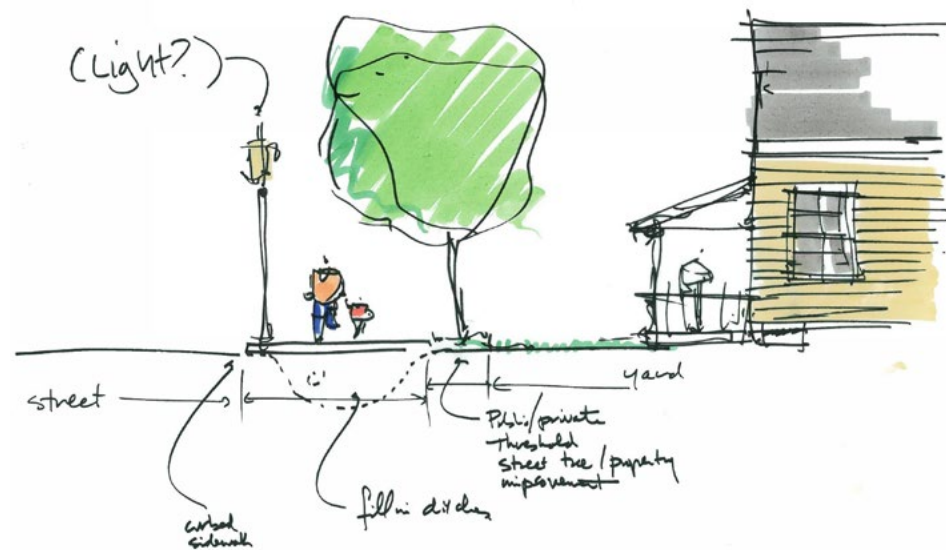


*Overgrown and obstructed drainage ditch.*

## Mobility and Connections

The target area has excellent vehicular access, and with the completion of the bike trail network along the Buffalo Bayou, will have excellent bicycle access as well. The major transportation initiatives will be to improve the pedestrian realm, and enhance transit service over time.

Sidewalks are missing throughout the target area, often leaving residents no option but to walk in the street. The inadequacy of the sidewalk connections has been extensively documented in the Fifth Ward Bike and Pedestrian Study. At least part of the difficulty in providing sidewalks stems from the extensive use of drainage ditches, discussed above. These ditches separate the sidewalk from the paved street, providing crossings only at corners or driveways, or via walkways built over drain pipes. For these reasons, they are rarely seen in urban areas. They are particularly problematic wherever parking is provided at the curb, as there is often no easy route from the parked car to the sidewalk.



*Replace drainage ditches with sidewalks. By filling in the ditches and providing stormwater drains, sidewalks can connect the entire neighborhood, supporting walking and enhancing property values and landscaping. The transition area between the sidewalks and front yards can be used to plant new trees through agreements with the owners to maintain them, and street lighting will enhance the safety and security of the district.*



In addition to the lack of sidewalks, many existing sidewalks are poorly maintained, too narrow, and are overgrown with vegetation. More regular maintenance is needed, and because of City of Houston Public Works policies, will unfortunately have to come from the neighborhood. Regular trimming and pruning of vegetation should occur along major streets and pedestrian corridors like Lyons, Gregg, and Waco. In key business areas, such as near the DeLuxe, wider sidewalks should be provided to improve walkability. In front of the theater, wide sidewalks can accommodate queuing theater patrons and in the long term, outdoor uses such as sidewalk dining.



*Overgrown sidewalk conditions on Lyons Avenue.*

With regards to transit infrastructure, now and for the foreseeable future transit service in the Fifth Ward will consist of Metro buses. Existing bus services converge at

the Fifth Ward/Denver Harbor Transit Center, located on the Lockwood Drive median north of I-10. This facility is served by the 11, 26, 27, 30, 42, 80 and 137 express busses. It provides canopies and waiting areas, as well as route information.

During the community work sessions, the following transit priorities were identified:

- More frequent weekend service (particularly important for working parents)
- Bus shelters east of Waco.
- Designating the routes as “transit corridors” to concentrate service and provide better passenger amenities.

Two buses connect the existing commercial center in Denver Harbor with the neighborhoods to the west. The 80 bus runs along Lyons Avenue, although it takes a detour along Solo, Noble and Waco when running westbound. Such unidirectional detours provide little benefit, add delay to the transit trip and also make the system less intelligible to the infrequent rider, and as a general rule should be avoided. The 80 bus also does not go all the way into the commercial center, stopping instead at the transfer hub. It may be worth exploring the opportunity to extend the run as far as Kress Street, circling back to the transit center on westbound I-10. Also over time, options for providing additional bus service along Lyons should be studied, either through consolidating routes, or adding additional service to the 80.

The 11 bus follows a meandering route through the neighborhood, alternatively running north and south of I-10. Unlike the 80, this bus does serve the heart of the Denver Harbor commercial district. As the area develops, providing a more direct and

logical route should be considered, either keeping the service north of I-10 on Lyons, or serving a south of I-10 corridor such as Clinton and Sonora.



*The Fifth Ward/Denver Harbor Transit Center.*

## **Open Space and Gardens**

The target area is fortunate to be well supplied with park resources. The two largest parks, both with pools and located south of I-10, are Finnigan Park and Denver Harbor Park. There are also smaller parks, including Kress Park in Denver Harbor, the Gregg Street Park, and the Jam on Lyons Avenue. Major linear open space facilities exist or are under development along the Buffalo Bayou.

Going forward, the emphasis in the neighborhood should be on pocket parks that serve as community gathering places. Some of these may be permanent, while others may be interim uses for vacant land. To be successful, such parks need to have some sort of facilities or programming that give residents a reason to gather there.

These might include a garden, a weekend market, tables for chess or checkers, or any number of things.

Community gardens have started to appear in the Fifth Ward on larger sites, the most significant being located on portions of a former rice mill on Emile Street. Community gardens are great assets and provide both educational and recreational opportunities for residents. On urban sites, given the prevalence of soil contamination, either the use of raised beds with fresh dirt, or extensive environmental testing for toxins, should be a precondition for the creation of any community garden.

As they grow in size and number, such gardens will start to yield significant amount of produce, particularly given the long growing season in Houston. While these vegetables and fruits may be distributed cooperatively to those who work the garden, there is also the opportunity to sell produce locally at weekend markets. Combined with educational classes on good nutrition and food preparation, such markets can help address the food desert conditions in the neighborhood.

Several of the target area's roadways, such as Waco and Lockwood, have generous green medians that widen at I-10 to convert the roadways into one-way pairs. The community has identified these as important gateway locations. Existing landscaping consists of little more than trees and grass. These should be targeted as important locations to provide better open space amenities and attractive gateway elements for the neighborhood.

## PLACES: URBAN DESIGN OF A COMMUNITY

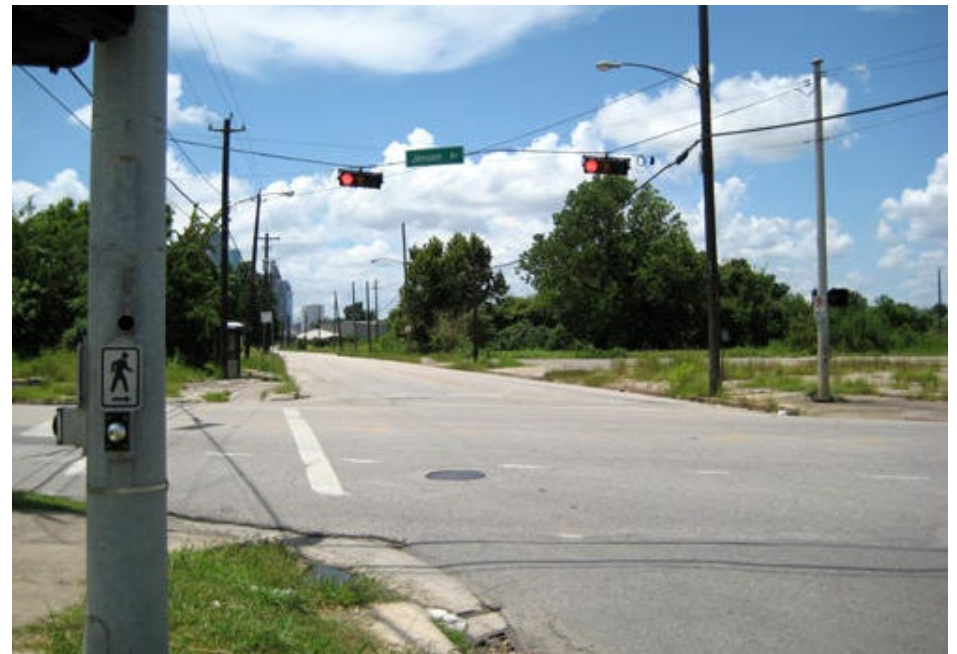
### Lyons Avenue Corridor

The Lyons Avenue corridor has always had a varied character along its length, as it stretched from Houston's downtown and its bordering industrial districts to the west and into the areas that lay between the reaches of the Buffalo Bayou and the web of rail lines and rail yards that cross the land. The "business end" of Lyons Avenue was once centered around the intersection of Lyons and Jensen Drive, and photos depict a busy business district, the Main Street of an African-American community. The commercial district extended as far as the Deluxe Theater, before transitioning into predominately residential streets, with some of the area's finest homes on relatively large lots, with churches, shops and small offices sprinkled in. Block after block of homes spread to the north and south of Lyons until they washed up against the rail lines, rail yards and the large industrial enterprises that clustered along the rails and Bayou.

The construction of the highway network virtually destroyed some of the vital relationships and connections that composed the community, isolating patches of housing and eliminating the great majority of the commercial buildings and uses that once served the community. The remnants of the civic and commercial district remain on the blocks that begin at Dittmans Court and extend to just beyond Pannell Street. This is the area that has received significant reinvestment, which needs to be completed, complemented and expanded to solidify its role as the active and symbolic



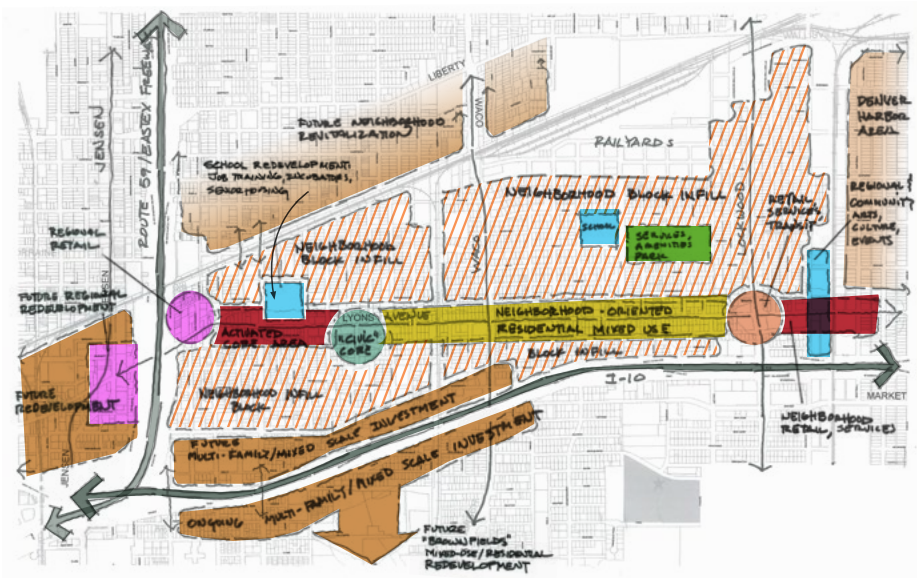
*The intersection of Lyons and Jensen, circa 1950.*



*A view of the same intersection today.*



heart of the Fifth Ward and its identification with the African-American community – past, present and future.



*The Lyons Avenue Corridor should be developed and designed as a sequence of different segments adapted to their location, the relationship to the neighborhood, and the connections that can be forged to bring amenity and economic vitality. For most of the area, the traditional fabric of small streets lined with well developed blocks should be restored.*

This vision recognizes that the highways and their interchanges damaged the neighborhood in ways that can never be restored. But it also recognizes that the highway access and the damaged and vacant land can be turned around to become a new and important asset to the community, repositioning Lyons Avenue in important ways. The restoration of the Deluxe Theater that will soon be underway is a critical step in the renaissance of this community core. The expansion and improvement of the “Fifth Ward Jam” park is another major step that will soon be completed, through the community collaborations that combine the contributions of Starbucks Coffee Company, the KaBOOM! organization, Reliant Energy and others.

This report recommends additional investments and physical improvements in the area. The reopening of the Deluxe Theater should be followed by reorganization to the streets, sidewalks, parking and adjacent development of the entire block, on both sides of the street. On the south side, the sidewalk should be re-routed to pass in front of the storefronts of the commercial/residential development, and the parking should be rearranged so that it is composed of perpendicular parking spaces along the street edge, retaining several of the existing trees. This will provide an expanded number of parking spaces and increase the visibility and access to the storefronts. The storefronts must be more transparent and interesting, housing start-up businesses or any viable use that will provide activity and can take advantage of the location. Due to deferred maintenance of the building, needed repairs should also be made as soon as possible to complement the theater’s opening.

The buildings and uses flanking the theater should be improved and possibly re-purposed or re-organized. For example, the existing market provides relatively high priced and low quality food and convenience items. In some communities, community-based non-profit cooperatives have been created to provide excellent service, produce and goods that are more reasonably priced. These cooperatives can become centers for active participation and the contributions of community members can reduce costs.

The H.P. Carter School needs to be improved and repurposed to be a more attractive, fully renovated contributor to the life of the community. While recognizing that the



mission of the site and the school buildings as an educational and vocational training center has been significant, its role and the quantity and quality of activity need to be assessed relative to alternatives. For example, other communities have repurposed all or portions of facilities of this type to contain housing, senior housing, special education programs, or other activities that directly contribute to the life of the surrounding neighborhood and streets that edge them.

This three-block stretch of Lyons Avenue will become a center of activity and special events – music, theater, art, and festivals – that make a civic center come alive. Our sketches suggest that a special lighting system be created to distinguish the area. This system would be composed of tall light masts with LED lights that can project colors, tones and different lighting qualities onto the façade of the Deluxe, along the sidewalks, into the parks and onto the events taking place at the Jam. This lighting system might have elements that only come on when events are underway, while others portions are permanent installations.

Major changes at an urban scale are envisioned for the blocks that line the Route 59 freeway, where Lyons Avenue passes underneath and near the highway ramps that connect the neighborhood to the region. A large format, multiple-purpose complex of stores could rise within the blocks between the neighborhood's core and the elevated highway. The building architecture and site improvements should ensure that it is a good neighbor that extends the frontage and quality of Lyons Avenue, with parking situated along and below the highway edge. Signs and lighting indicating

the new development and the gateway to the district should enliven the street and rise up above the highway, making the Fifth Ward newly visible. At the ground level, landscaping, lighting, generous sidewalks and bicycle connections should make access to and from the new stores and businesses easily accessible.

Across the highway to the west, the intersection of Lyons Avenue and Jensen Drive can become an entirely new district composed of other regionally-serving stores, offices, and housing. Not unlike the advantages of the “ballparker” district that is rising along the edges of I-10, this could be a great place to live, work and shop that would be connected to – and identified with – the Fifth Ward as part of a gateway program. The land ownership of some parcels by the Fifth Ward CRC and the need to re-organize City streets provides an opportunity to create well-defined standards for excellent architecture and special features – lighting, signage, pedestrian ways and art work – that will link this growing district to the Fifth Ward along the streets and ways that pass below the highway.

Heading east along Lyons Avenue from the civic core near Pannell Street, the character should revert back to the residential, pleasant character that it traditionally has had, with occasional interruptions for small stores, shops or institutions. When other uses are not viable, reversion to a residential use should be accomplished through targeted reinvestment. The former St. Elizabeth's Hospital needs to have a more friendly and pleasant face to the street; it is a landmark that can be easily enhanced with improved landscaping and fencing.

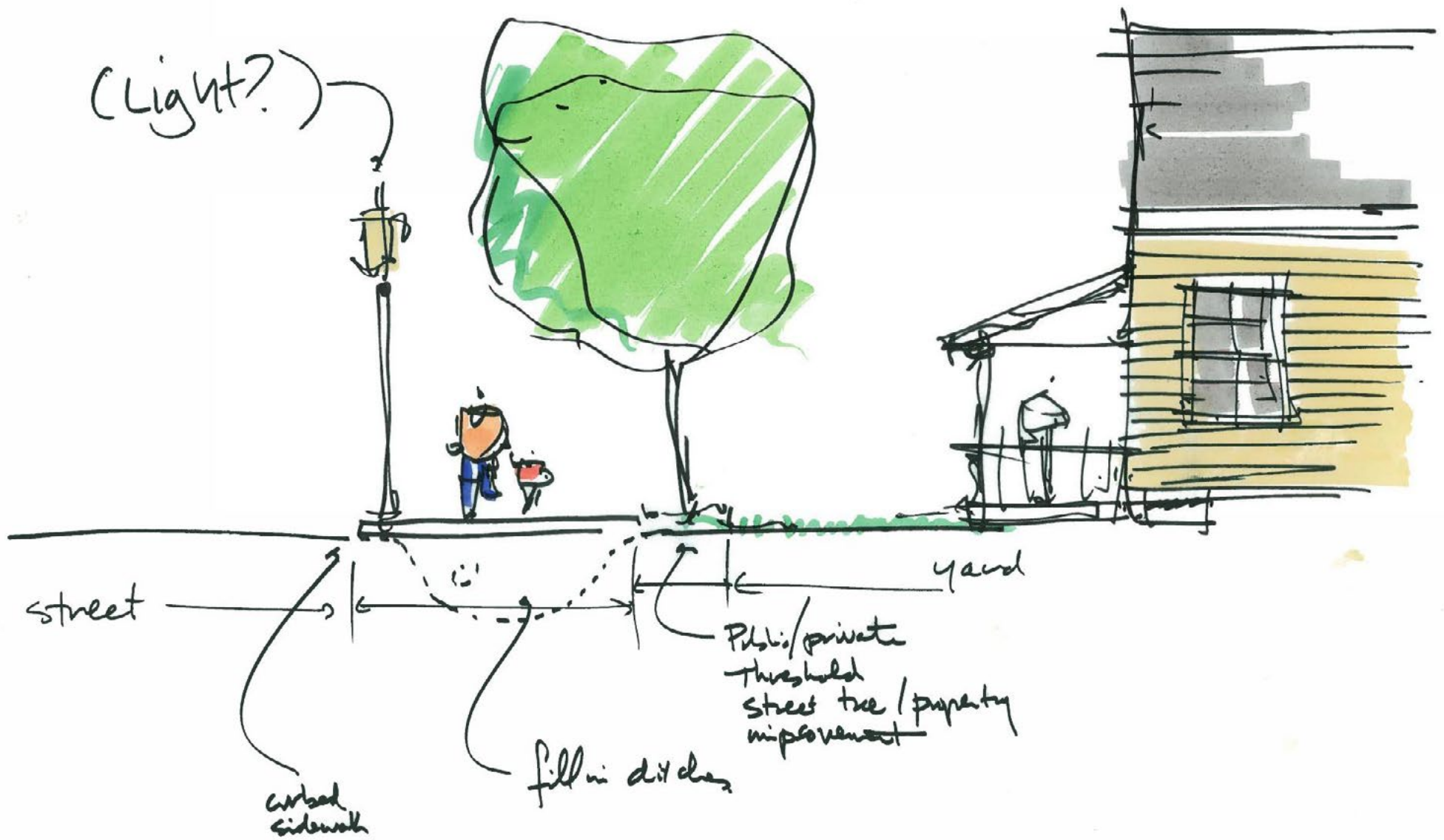


*Lyons Avenue commercial and civic core. The restoration of the Deluxe Theater should be the start of a significant renovation of the western blocks of Lyons Avenue, including reinvestment and attraction of small businesses and stores, and re-organization of parking and streetscape to create a more vital pedestrian experience.*

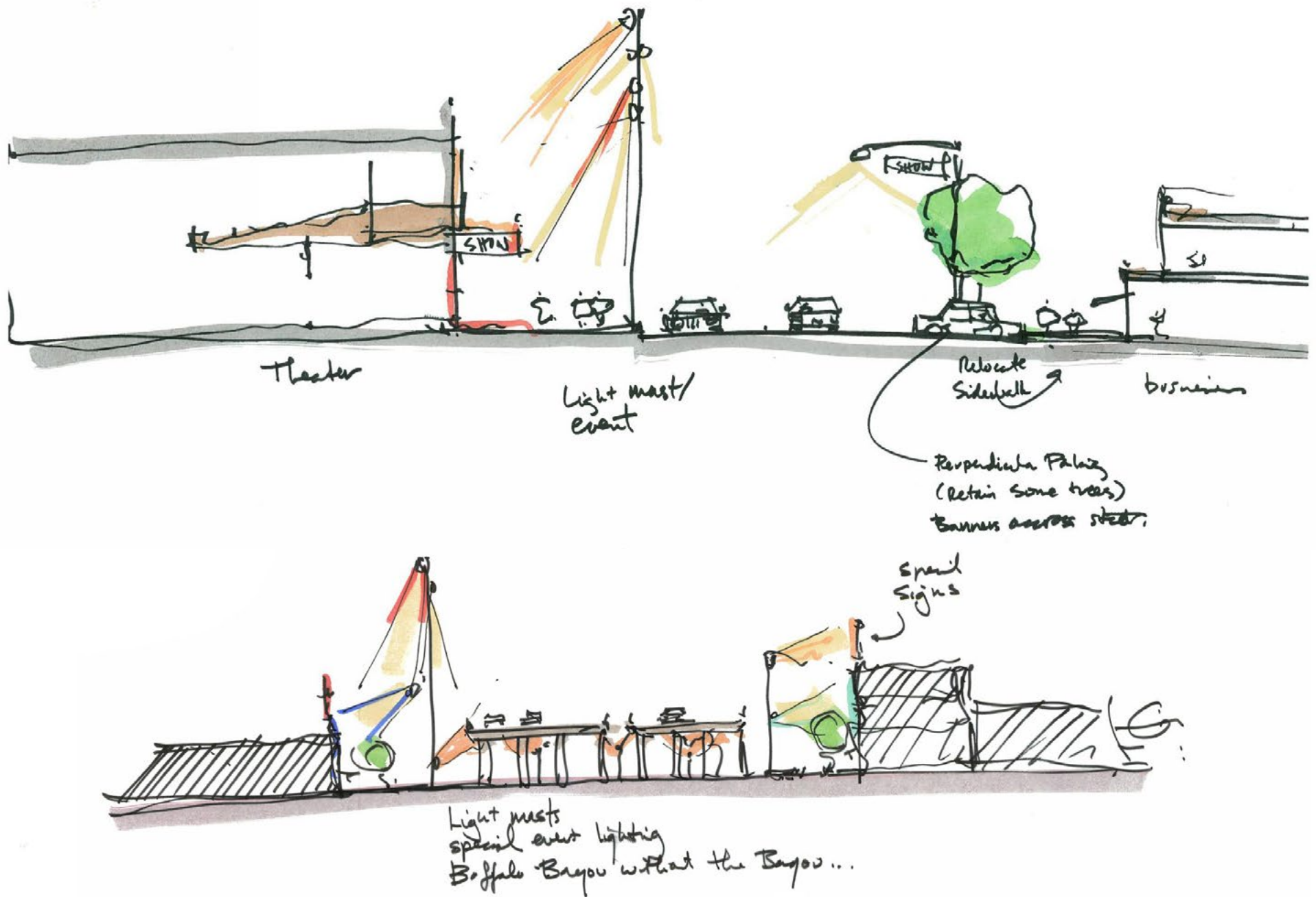


*Lyons Avenue as a commercial street: Expanding and filling the retail, business, and service space along Lyons Avenue should use well-understood architecture and urban design principles that include creating transparent storefronts and windows, relocating parking to on-street locations rather than in front of the buildings, and using trees and streetscaping to create a shaded, pleasant walking area next to the businesses and storefronts.*



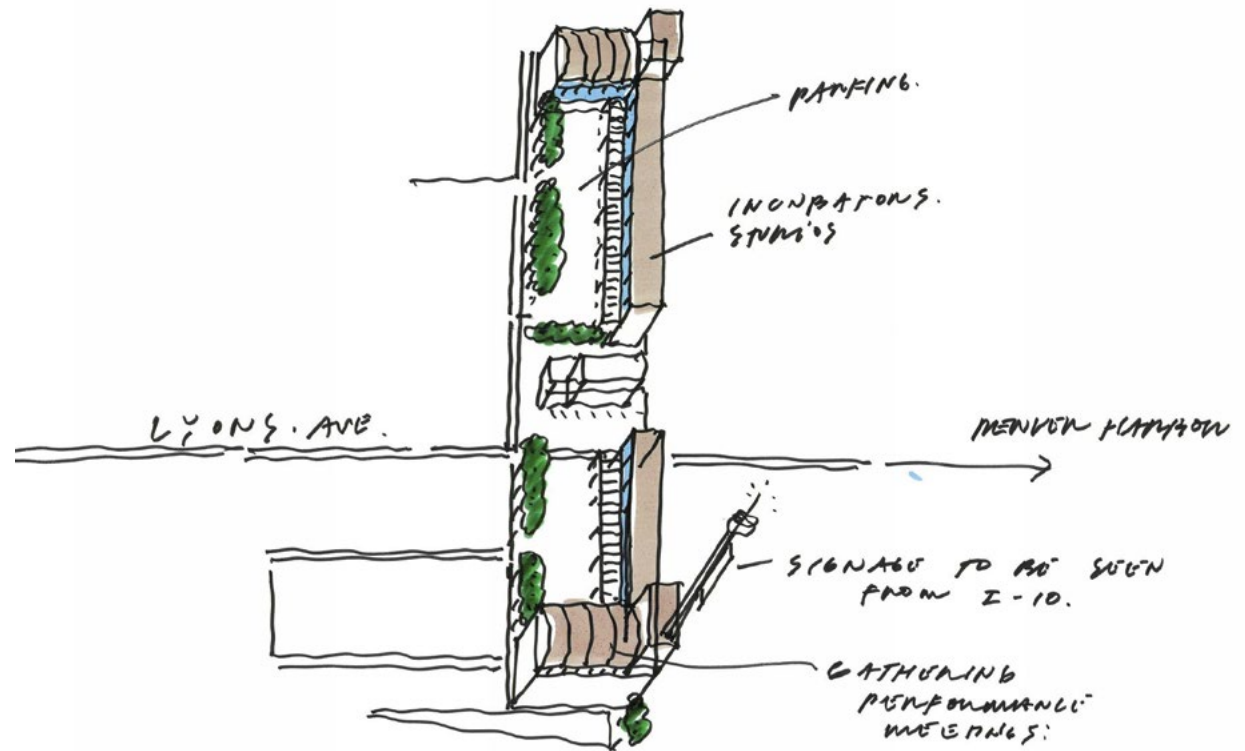






Lighting and urban design. Inspired, innovative lighting can be used to transform special landmark locations at night. Special light masts using theatrical-type colorful lighting could be used to illuminate the Deluxe for events and shows, the Jam when it is in us, and where Lyons passes below Route 59 to make it visible - much like the creative light artists have done for segments of Buffalo Bayou in other parts of Houston.

Other changes are envisioned on the eastern blocks of the Lyons Avenue corridor between Lockwood Drive and the rail corridor that separates the planning area from the Denver Harbor neighborhood, which lines the continuation of Lyons Avenue. This has become a boundary area between the predominately Hispanic communities and the existing and traditional centers of the African-American communities. It is an important commercial and transportation center that has the benefit of excellent walking, transit and roadway accessibility within the larger Fifth Ward context. However, the shopping and services in the area need to be user-friendly and accessible to all segments of the population to be most successful. Redevelopment of several industrial sites into community-oriented services and businesses could convert these neighborhood edges into a shared asset. This should be reflected in the architecture and design of the blocks, buildings, streets, parks and open spaces to make this a secondary hub in the neighborhood.



*Building a neighborhood Connector. This sketch envisions the redevelopment of several light industrial blocks that flank Lyons Avenue at the boundary with the adjacent Denver Harbor neighborhood. This area could have educational opportunities/ business incubators, gathering and cultural performances spaces, and a plaza for community events. Redeveloping these blocks would improve connections among the convenience shopping in the area and to the nearby transit hub for both neighborhoods.*





## **Streets**

The streets and sidewalks create the public realm that helps define and connect a neighborhood. Converting the roadside drainage ditches and swales into sidewalks with curbs and curb side drains linked to a contemporary stormwater control system is one of the most basic and essential improvements that should be conducted throughout the neighborhood. The street design, parking, sidewalks and drainage systems should become “complete streets” that balance all of the requirements of each component, including sustainable environmental practices to diminish the impacts of stormwater runoff and pollution and thorough adaptation to the needs of those with handicaps.

The sidewalks should be aligned along the streets to allow curbside convenience parking for visitors to a neighborhood and even residents, where the overall density is planned and managed through the land management tools that we describe in this report. This approach allows for more cost effective and efficient use of the private property, increasing the value of redevelopment.

The sidewalks, when they are added, will create an opportunity for additional trees to be added through agreement with the property owners that will grow into rows of shade trees, further adding to the walkable environment and the value of the private properties. Integrated into the streetscape should be a network of sturdy street lights.

The segments of sidewalks need to be consistently connected to each other with crosswalks where they meet the busier streets and intersections. As part of the baseline improvements, sidewalk extensions should be created to narrow the walking distances across the street and help slow traffic. Bus stops should be generous and allow for pull-off of the buses out of the way of passing traffic.

Bicycling paths and routes should be created and marked, with care to make sure that they are well integrated into and balanced with other needs. This might include transitions from marked lanes or even exclusive use paths, to shared bike/walking paths and “sharrows” that alert drivers and bicyclists to the shared use of traffic lanes. In some cases, new streets may be contemplated, including significant re-organization to facilitate neighborhood-benefitting development. For example, the alignment of the streets and roads in the area of the Lyons Avenue/Jensen Drive Area might be substantially reconstructed. In every case, however, the goal should be to invite pedestrians and enhance the connectivity of the district rather than to serve vehicles alone.

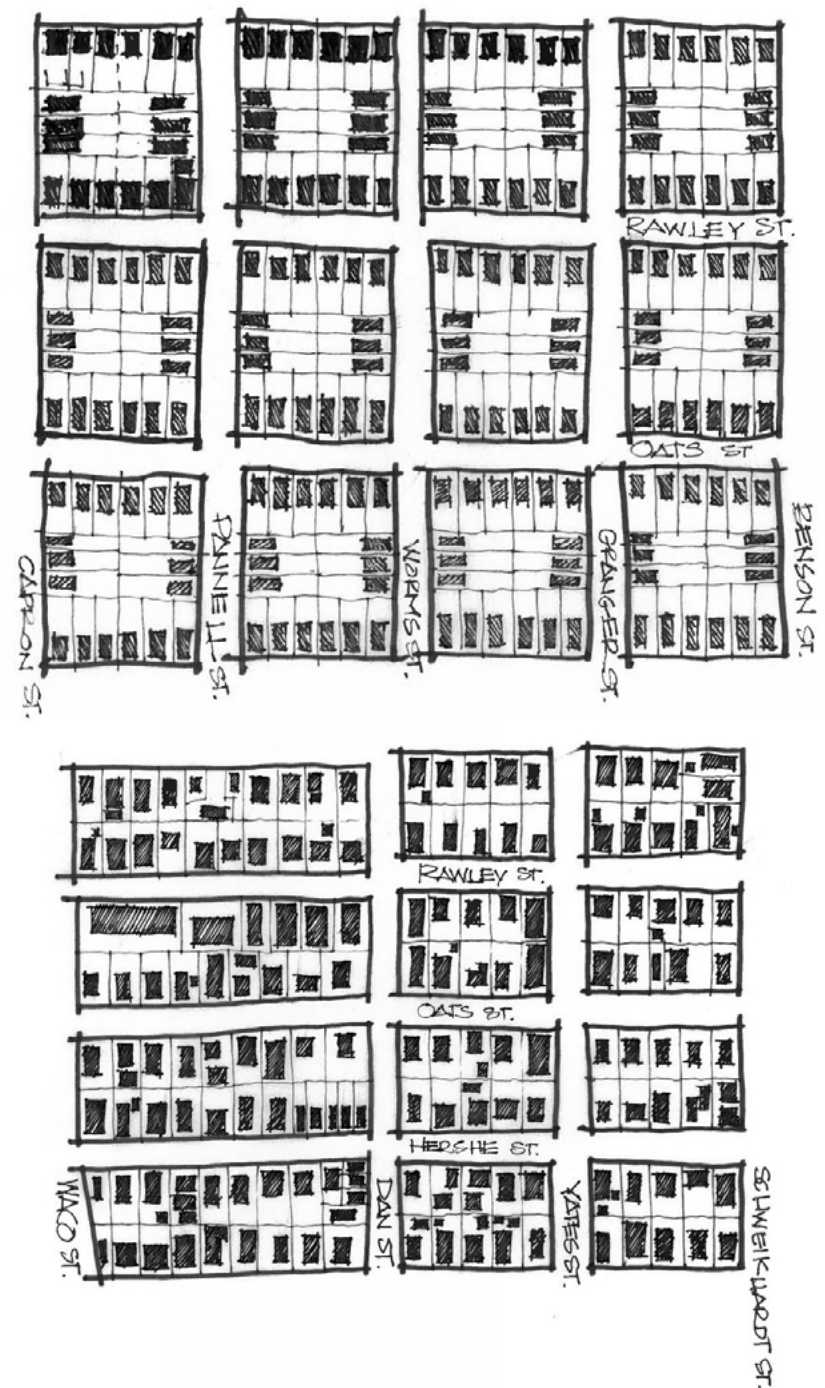
## **Blocks**

The Fifth Ward is largely composed of a grid-like pattern of blocks. The subdivision of most of these blocks into many small parcels strongly influenced the past character and scale of the community, including the ability to absorb new uses and development. The great majority of the blocks have been broken into small lots that once held separate houses and cottages – sometimes with entire rows or clusters of



cottages jammed onto the same small lot. The resulting pattern – when the blocks are filled with houses, shops and sheds - can be very well suited to healthy and sustainable neighborhoods. However, in this part of the Fifth Ward, the pattern has been evaporating as houses and businesses have been abandoned and removed, creating substantial gaps throughout the area. There are over 400 empty lots today, which often become “no man’s lands” with thick undergrowth and widespread dumping.

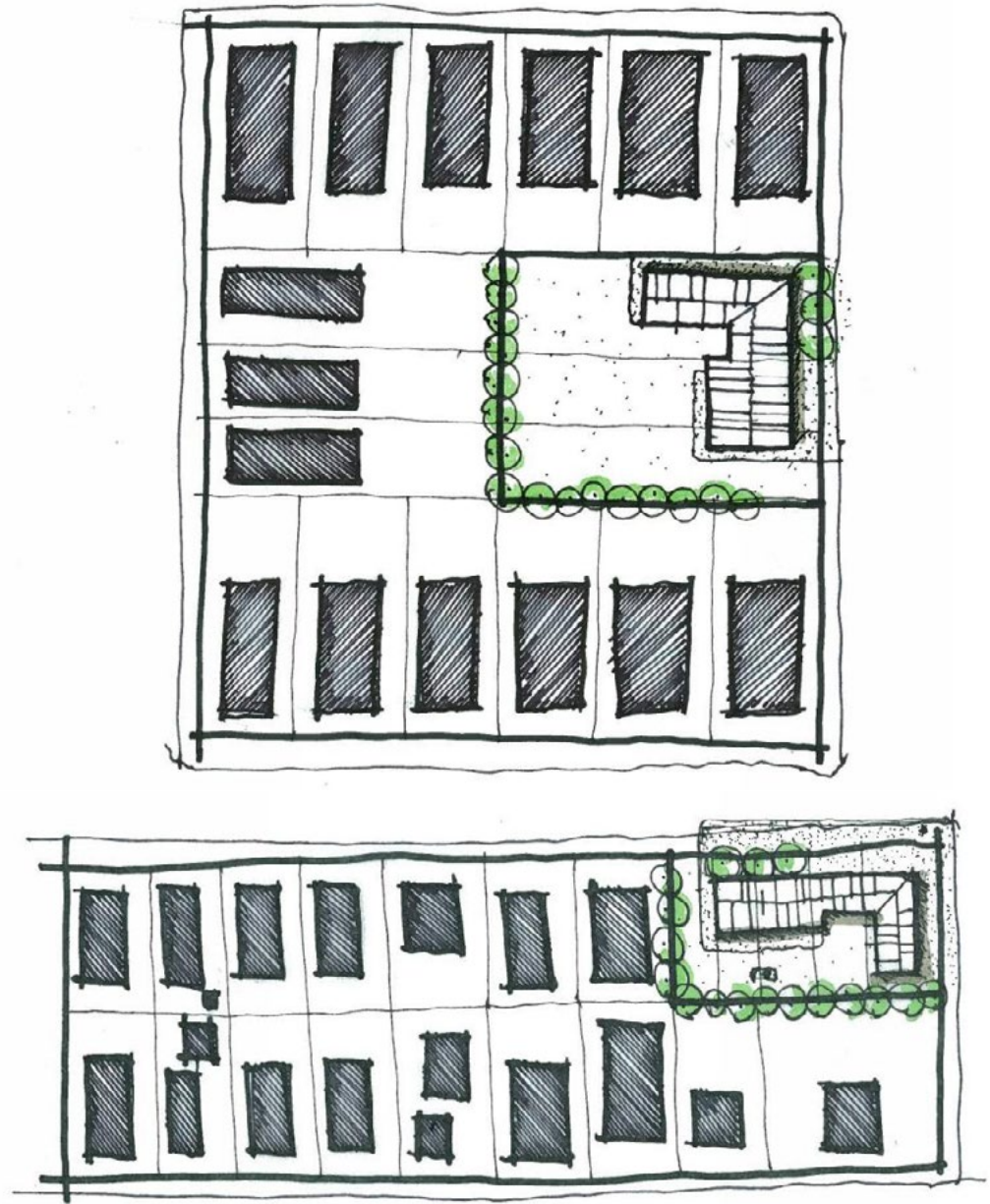
Due to the extent of this problem, a successful redevelopment strategy must convert as many of the empty lots into useful housing to complete as many blocks as possible and as quickly as possible. This can be called an “infill strategy” that fills in the block parcels, with buildings that will be good neighbors to the many houses and buildings that remain – but they do not all need to be single family homes. In other similar communities, development has included two-family units and row-house type units that are entered off the street and sidewalk. A combination of these unit types in some areas may be more cost-effective and provide different opportunities for ownership and family types. We can look forward to a long-term future that has this combination of unit sizes and types on many blocks. Where a choice exists between more homes being built versus more blocks being completed, the decision should be made to provide fewer multi-family developments and spread the reinvestment geographically, dramatically restoring complete blocks to match the complete streets. As we have noted about the street design, parking standards should be



*The existing block pattern.*

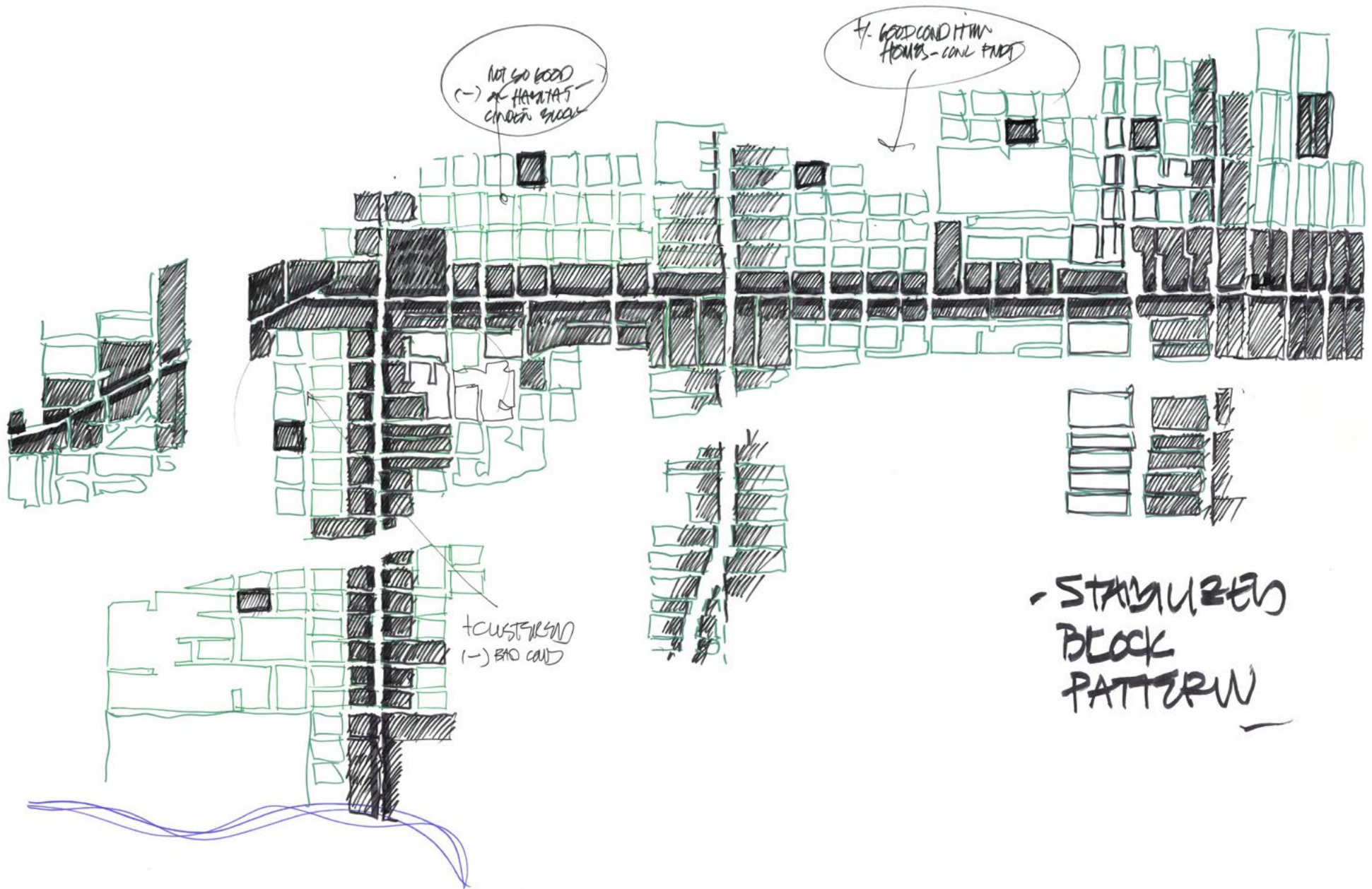
flexibly applied so that parking needs are met, but the overall goal of block revitalization is fulfilled.

In some areas of the neighborhood, different housing types including dense, multi-family development can and should spring up. It is highly likely that the southwestern and western edges of the neighborhood and some land near Lyons Avenue can beneficially converted to dense multi-story development. Wherever this occurs, however, it is critically important that the housing not become effective islands within the neighborhood – the buildings and their entrances should face and line the streets and sidewalks, and parking should not interrupt the character of the street and the pleasant walking neighborhood. A consistent approach to this will result in a safer, more attractive and far more valuable district for everyone's benefit. There are many good urban design and architecture models for neighborhood friendly development, and great architects, landscape architects and developers in the Houston region who will contribute to this outcome.



*Restoring and respecting residential block patterns. The conversion of multiple, empty lots into new multi-family or townhouse residential development should respect the scale, setbacks, and orientation of front doors. This approach adds value to the entire block when reinvestment occurs.*





An overall view of the existing block pattern

## Intersections

We have emphasized the character of Lyons Avenue along its length, and the importance of the major intersection areas where the highway and street system come together. The pattern of blocks and type of development at the three major intersection areas should be significantly different than the typical blocks that make up the neighborhood. We have provided some images and inspirations about the forms and character of the buildings, places and open spaces at the three major crossings:

- The interchanges and intersections of Lyons, Jensen and Route 59
- The intersections near Gregg Street and Lyons
- The intersections near Lockwood Drive

This team also recognizes the immense impacts that the at-grade rail crossings have on many areas of the community, effectively cutting off access to neighboring areas for long periods of time. Because of the arrangement of rail yards, grade separation of the rail seems impractical. However, additional grade separations for some through streets with underpasses or overpasses might be planned, with operational standards or guidelines instituted through shared advocacy by all of the neighborhood-oriented interest groups in the city.

## Edges

Quality neighborhoods have high quality, well defined and valuable edges. Several actions and investments can strengthen the edges of the neighborhood. Among the

suggestions included in the discussions and diagrams prepared by the R/UDAT team are the following:

- Sound and landscape buffers – The edges of the depressed highways and the at-grade rail yards should be lined with sound walls that incorporate attractive landscaping to convert undesirable edges into reasonable neighbors. This type of improvement raises the quality of life and the value of the neighborhood immensely, and has been installed in many comparable locations. Its impact for the Fifth Ward’s revitalization goal is important.
- Filling in the empty lots and underutilized property at the gateways and transitions – The empty lots and underutilized building at the community gateways need to become priority redevelopment areas, so that the gateway signage and art are accompanied with vital, valuable neighboring improvements.

## Connections

Some of the improvements and enhancements that are good for the Fifth Ward and the focus area of this study can be extended into the surrounding areas and neighborhoods. For example, sound barriers and landscape buffers will be beneficial to other parts of the Ward along I-10 and the rail lines.

## Landscape

The landscape of the neighborhood benefits from the lush, near tropical climate and the many plants and trees that thrive here. Looking into the future, there are many opportunities to extend an intentional landscape designed to reinforce a great neighborhood.



- Street trees – Street trees provide numerous benefits, and over the long term can create distinctive characteristics. For example, the live oaks that shade the streets of entire districts along the sidewalks in some of Houston’s neighborhoods are valued and memorable. We suggest that all street and sidewalk improvement projects include the addition of trees that may be similar along the same streets, but different from one another. So, for example, we are recommending that the Starbucks-sponsored neighborhood improvement program designate one or two tree types and extent them along targeted sections of Lyons Avenue. Other species may line the neighboring streets, and grace the parks of the district.
- Parks and community gardens – The neighborhood is expanding its parks and community garden network, and a few of the existing open lots should be held aside to provide expanded opportunities in the future. The City’s initiatives and community participants already make this a high-quality dimension to the neighborhood’s life. It is equally essential to establish and maintain committed stewardship to these spaces over time.
- Private green space – the pattern of green front yards and side yards distinguishes a low scale and high quality neighborhood. The City’s subdivision code and other applicable standards or development agreements should promote space that will be part of a resident’s yard, but benefit the entire neighborhood as visual assets.

## **BRAND STRATEGY: LEVERAGING THE SPIRIT OF THIS PLACE**

This, the final component of the R/UDAT report, is about a strategy—a Brand Strategy—for connecting the many initiatives proposed for Fifth Ward. The Brand Strategy is a parallel implementation process, one that is grounded not in governance, law and finance, but in the emotional connections that people have with the Fifth Ward as it was or presently is, or as importantly those that can be fostered or enhanced for a new sustaining place.

**The topic of branding is one that is on the mind of most everyone these days. And, it is certainly one that is top of mind within the Fifth Ward community.**

We all know what a “brand” is, of course. Each and every one of us in our lives has those things that we naturally think are the best for us. The food we buy, the clothes we like, the cars we seek to own, even the toothpaste we prefer—are but a few of those things that we select to meet our daily needs, or to bring us joy, comfort, and pleasure with our discretionary income. In fact, we become wedded to many of our brands to the point that we can’t imagine considering anything else—they mean that much in defining who we are in the world. The way they taste, the style and attitude they represent, the respect they bring to us by our peers (“wow, he really has good taste”), or the value they represent are among the many things we associate with a brand beyond some identifiable logo. People, after all, do not head to McDonalds simply because they have the golden arches.

## **Places can be brands, too.**

We often do not think of places as brands, even though many of us are, indeed, emotionally drawn and at times committed to a particular place. Sometimes it’s a region of the country, or a particular city. We tell people things such as: “Look, I am a Southerner through and through, and I can’t imagine living anywhere else.” Or: “You can take the girl out of the city, but not the city out of the girl.” The point is, such views by some people belie a simple truth: People form relationships with places that have great value and meaning to them.

**Neighborhoods are one of those places where people form the greatest bonds.**

This is not surprising in that for most of us the house in which we live, the street that it is a part of, and the blocks that link all of the other houses, streets, parks and other places together is where the bulk of our lives are lived and our memories are formed. We get accustomed—if not comfortable—with our surroundings and existence—so much so that at times we take our environment for granted. This reality often has positive connotations. We form friendships with our neighbors for socialization. We create and support community organizations that bring meaning and joy into our lives for our kids and us. Schools are often at the center of life for families, but other institutions that support people in other family types or stations in life are in the mix. And, enveloping all of our relationships with our neighborhoods is a general sense of stewardship and belonging that is unique to that neighborhood. That is, great neighborhoods are, indeed, very much like valued consumer brands.

**However, some neighborhoods suffer from factors, situations, realities and perceptions that do not contribute adequately to a fully enjoyed and self-sustaining life.**

Some neighborhoods, in fact, can embody more negative experiences in the life of the residents than positive ones. Equally, the perception of such neighborhoods by those on the outside of the neighborhood can be even more negative, preventing many types of social and capital investment often required to change the reality for those who live there, and leaving them without a real choice to go elsewhere. As the old saying goes, “Perception is Reality.” In the world of brands, this statement is, indeed, reality. When the perception by many within a neighborhood, and even more so by those within the broader society, is a negative one, the chance for fundamental and sustaining change is very limited. And, many would say that this is exactly the current situation with the Fifth Ward.

### **What is the Brand of the Fifth Ward?**

Fifth Ward’s brand outside of the community as a great place to live has been severely compromised by the events and situations over the past 60 or so years. Many of these situations are no different than those that attended the demise of many inner city neighborhoods in the wake of the centrifugal forces unleashed after WWII that caused suburbanization, and the parallel presentation of new housing choices to African Americans as a result of desegregation. As a result, the Fifth Ward slowly became less representative of a broad economic and education spectrum of the African American community, and more of one at the lower end. The particularization of these events can be best summed up with the most universally known slogan for the Fifth Ward:

The Bloody Nickel. This simple three-word phrase is short hand for every negative experience that someone living outside of the Fifth Ward might possibly perceive.

And yet, despite the incredible emotional baggage connoted by the Bloody Nickel epithet, life is lived within the Fifth Ward—and lived by many in a valued manner. Social relationships do flourish, for many centered around church life. Kids do form bonds and friendships—and oftentimes with those of another ethnic or racial background. And families, one generation from the next, have and continue to call the Fifth Ward home. Unfortunately, this striving for a full, rich and meaningful life by some is compromised by the reality of the physical place, the economic conditions that they find themselves in, and the mental baggage of The Bloody Nickel.

### **And, as importantly, why should anyone care about the Brand of the Fifth Ward?**

The reason is simple: Tending to the brand of the Fifth Ward is a key component to implementing and sustaining the many initiatives presented within this R/UDAT study. For, the simple truth is that the Fifth Ward is in competition with many other places, ideas, and programs for all manner of resources necessary to fulfill your vision. You are competing with other neighborhoods for government programs to fund all manner of potential infrastructure, housing improvements and cultural opportunities. You will be in the search for private investment by real estate developers to create new opportunities in retail and job creation. And, ultimately, the Fifth Ward is seeking to grow its community with people who find both value in its core positive attributes, and in the new community that it is seeking to build around them.

### **Building Place Brands is very similar to the process that attends Consumer Brands.**

As you can see, great brands are not about logos or slogans that you simply put on a sticker, or about shallow pronouncements. Great brands stand for something, they are experienced, and they invest hard work to create and sustain them. Fortunately, a clear process can be established for the Fifth Ward that is tried and true, one that many of the highly valued consumer brands religiously employ to create those products and experiences that people seek out and support with their time and their treasure. Above all else, great brands embody a belief system. This belief system functions at many levels. It acts as:

- a telescope, to show you where you need to go; and
- a compass, to keep you on course.

### **The Seven Steps in Creating and Sustaining a Valued Brand for the Fifth Ward.**

These belief systems—whether it be for a pair of tennis shoes, a restaurant, an automobile or for a city—consist of seven key elements that, taken together, constitute the DNA of any given brand.\* Recognizing, communicating, and nurturing each of these seven key components is at the core of building and sustaining any brand.

The R/UDAT team has begun the process of uncovering, editing and distilling the emotional elements that constitute the sum total of the Fifth Ward experience. This includes those memories and experiences that the neighborhood will wish to not only take forward with it into the future, but to concretize into a new narrative that envelopes both the life of the place as one lives it, and the image of the place as many will perceive it. However, this is simply a beginning as filtered by outsiders—in whom perceptions exist. It will be incumbent upon insiders—the residents and leaders by and through whom the current reality in the Fifth Ward exists—to hone and manage these seven elements of your DNA.

### ***When Your Life Was Low: Joe Simon and Layla Hathaway***

Always remember my friend,

The world will change again.

And you may have to come back

Through everywhere you've been.

When your life was low,

You had nowhere to go.

People turned their backs on you,

And everybody said that you were through.

I took you in, made you strong again

Put you back together.

Out of all the dreams you left along the way,

You left me shining.

Now you're doing well

From stories I hear tell.

You own the world again.

Everyone's your friend.

Although I never hear from you,

Still it's nice to know

You used to love me so,

When your life was low.



## **1. The Creation Story**

All great brands started somewhere, somehow. The best ones have stories that emotionally connect with people, and embody the core values and opportunities for a place for the long term.

### **Fifth Ward's Creation Story**

Fifth Ward was founded as a multi-cultural, mixed race neighborhood. African Americans, Anglos, Asians and Hispanic all found a home here. Later, Lyon Street grew into Houston's African American "Main Street". Along that street, and through various other places new strains of music sprang from the throat, fingers and lungs of residents, which was exported all over America, and indeed the world. It has always been home to those seeking to make the American Dream work for them. In fact, residents of the Fifth have a history of helping each other, of looking after their own. And, the African-American community has kept the "home fires burning" for all others to come back to the Fifth Ward.

### **Why this Creation Story is Important**

There are two agendas that must be pursued if the Fifth Ward is to rise above its current state. First, it must create through infrastructure improvements and institutional additions and refinement a proper and civil "baseline" condition for community to exist. Secondly, this new place must attract new investment from many people in order to create a constituency of new citizens—be they the sons and daughters who can trace their history to the Fifth, or offspring of the world seeking a genuine connection with a true urban community with an "own-able" point of view: All Can

Find Their Place in the Fifth Ward. A new narrative that demonstrates that the Fifth Ward will once again become a community of choice advances the cause for new public and private investment. Without it, and without it being front and center of public consciousness, and repeated clearly and often, it is very difficult to envision acceleration toward the new future the Fifth Ward seeks.

## **2. The Creed**

The best brands embody a strong ethos about something bigger than the obvious. Often times, consumer brands actually advance an ethos so clearly and inseparable from their brand that the company begins to take on the mantle of a cause, such as saving the environment, finding a cure for breast cancer, or—as the Fifth Ward is about to experience with Starbucks—supporting the creation of a better life.

### **Fifth Ward's Creed: *Creating Possibilities for a Full American Life.***

Neighborhoods are about social capital—creating it, nurturing it, and rewarding it. And, it has historically been in the DNA of the Fifth Ward, through the Masonic Lodge, the Julia C. Hester House, and not the least the strong church community. Its nurturing ways created gifts for America, in the form of strong leaders in civil rights—such as Lonnie Smith— and in government—such as Barbara Jordan and Mickey Leland. Fueled in part by African Americans rejection of slavery, and fueled by the hope and possibilities afforded by hard work for all, Fifth Warders have had a long history of seeking excellence in what you do no matter where you began. For citizens of the Fifth, the next rung on the ladder was only one step away.

### **Why a Creed is Important**

Changing the narrative of the Fifth Ward away from the implied one embodied within the term “The Bloody Nickel” is overwhelmingly important. For one, this is negative baggage that weighs to varying degrees on the self-image of everyone who now lives within the neighborhood. Always having to defend one’s neighborhood, to shield the emotions of one’s children from such an extant and now erroneous stereotype can be draining and demoralizing. Moreover, a moniker that implies that the top experience in a place is likely to be murder is not a good first introduction to potential new residents.

Changing this narrative will demand constant and unwavering attention through everything that is within the power of the leaders and citizens of the Fifth Ward. This includes:

- every contact you have within and outside of the community;
- every communiqué that is initiated with the media;
- And most importantly through every community building activity that the community undertakes.

Community building activities are exceedingly important in making sure that your new creed is not simply a string words. Making real the words can span the gamut, from the creation and programming of the numerous new community facilities presented within this report, to seemingly small but no less impactful behavioral initiatives by certain institutions, businesses and individuals within the community. For example, one of the biggest cultural divides in the community centers upon

the separation of life between the African American and Hispanic communities. The divide, of course, is not one characterized by overt violence, but simply one that at the margins involves mistrust, misunderstanding and miscommunication. Initiatives by both organizations, businesses and individuals on both sides of the cultural divide to simply connect and to seek situations of shared experience—no matter how small—plant the seeds for a new and genuine narrative that continues both continues the Creation Story, and validates the Creed.

### **3. The Icons**

All great brands have icons that are calling cards, and surrogates, for the bigger and complex experience that constitutes the brand. Governments have flags, religions have symbols, and consumer brands have logos. Dig deeper, however, and you find the artifacts and settings through which the experience lives.

#### **Fifth Ward’s Icon**

The iconic places and buildings of the Fifth Ward are sadly few and far between. The most prominent one by far is the DeLuxe Theater. Thankfully, it is not only being saved, but repurposed in such a manner that the process of its restoration provides a model for the creation of new Icons in a future Fifth Ward. Even though it will no longer be a movie theater (the use that created all of the fond memories), it will become a live theatre that has an institutional partner in the form of Texas Southern University.

### **Why Icons are Important**

Just as many brands have Icons that become pivots around which the brand is experienced and therefore known and valued, so too is it important for the Fifth Ward to create and sustain a number of institutions, places, and engagements through which the Creation Story and the Creed are lived every day. For example, within this report a number of various new buildings if not institutions are suggested as positive additions for one reason or another to the Fifth Ward. Each of these places serves a positive and normative role in supporting a higher quality of life for residents of the Fifth Ward.

However, suppose for a moment that a new community center not only met unsolved and unanswered needs, but was created, funded, programmed, designed and managed in such a way that it manifested the Creed of the Fifth Ward. In fact, finding ways to make sure the Creed was at the center of the process should be a brand building priority. And, suppose in doing so you also do it such a manner that a partner with similar values in either the public or private sectors chooses to be a part of it—now, wouldn't that be something!

Let's not stop at the community center. Where could this type of thinking take us if we apply it to recasting the Phyllis Wheatley High School? It is well known that at one time the school was revered in the community, that is was indeed the center of community life. For various reasons, many believe that this is not the situation today. What if the high school became more associated with offerings that resonate with the

community, including, for example an expanded music and arts program more along the lines of Houston's famed Booker T. Washington High School? And, instead of being the home to undifferentiated new commercial development, that new job producing and needs providing place also embodied the equivalent of a "town square," a place where both locals and those from the outside can come together? Imagine that over time and through patient and purposeful acts, this town square became home to the seminal music of the Fifth Ward, of local artisans incubated within now vacant and undervalued street level space, and of local restaurants serving cuisine reflective of this new urban community? Even if the results are modest at first, it is genuineness that both counts with those who will want to be a part of it and that sustains it over time.

These are merely a few opportunities that can come your way.

With a lot of hard work and dogged determination, the Fifth Ward can find those critical moments in time when your great Creation Story catches up with your Creed, with both reinforced in daily life by the Icons that announce and signify the Fifth Ward.

### **4. The Rituals**

All successful and notable brands have those patterns of activity that bring people together to reaffirm why they support something, why they belong. Governments have pledges to flags (their Icon.) Religions reinforce their beliefs through prescribed prayer and time for gathering together. And, consumer brands have their peculiarly

prescribed yet effective patterns that they ask you to adopt. Have you ever ordered a cup of coffee at a Starbucks? And, of course, all of us now “Google” information—whether we actually use Google or not!

The point is that all rituals, whether they are large or small, daily or annual, have the power to create a shared culture among followers, and to replace the chaos in our lives with order and meaning.

### **The Rituals of the Fifth Ward**

During the R/UDAT, the team uncovered or observed few shared rituals in the lives of residents. Meeting at the “cut” to hopefully encounter old friends, whether you saw them last a few days or a few years ago, was one idea that resulted in lively discussion. The emergence of community gardens represents more than food, bringing people together around a great hopeful idea, and fostering conversation. And, no doubt there are those rituals that are “below the radar screen,” ones that neighbors and friends engage in that would not necessarily be brought up in a discussion with strangers simply because they operate on an almost unconscious level.

However, as a new Fifth Ward emerges there is a necessity for new, shared rituals to be formed. The team observed the beginnings of a new community ritual with a neighborhood run for some residents, complete with t-shirts announcing that it was the “First Annual!” Earlier in the report you were introduced to the idea of a public gathering place—a “town square”—where a music & cultural festival could be held,

replete with a newly created Icon that is part Ritual: Turn On The Lights! These periodic events—for they can be more than annual affairs—where both residents of the Fifth (and those from the outside that wish to be a part of your culture for only a moment in time) cement in the minds of both groups what this new Fifth is all about. And, Houston knows when to show up when they see that spectacular light show from the highway when you Turn On The Lights!

This is merely one example of the type of Rituals, supported with Icons (the “town square” and the special event lights), that reaffirms your Creed and validates your Creation Story. There are others that are more subtle, less glamorous, and yet no less effective. And, they can be done in the here and now. The first one is to simply pick up the trash. The first hurdle is to eliminate the belief, no matter how correct this perception may be, that this is a role for government. Find a way to self-organize. Get the funds for your own truck, or trucks. Recruit that core group of volunteers who have both the passion and the anger to say: “My kids live here, and I don’t want them to grow up around somebody else’s trash.” Give the activity a name. Establish set days and times for the trash pick-up to occur.

### **Why Rituals are Important**

This first ritual of “Pick Up The Trash” can yield enormous benefit at many levels. It signals your intention, as a community, that you are both proud and self-reliant—one of the attributes of your Creation Story. And, it sends the message to both residents



and the outside world that the Fifth has turned the corner, and is embracing and striving for a new day.

### **5. The Leaders**

How many brands can you name where a person or people is identified with the very essence of its being? Christianity has Jesus Christ. Islam has Mohammed. And America had its Founding Fathers, and later Abraham Lincoln who set the stage to make America's core beliefs legitimate, and later still Martin Luther King to solidify them in the deeds and actions of daily and civic life.

Less profound belief systems have leaders too. Steve Jobs built Apple. Orville Redenbacher gave us some pretty good popcorn. Paul Newman showed us that an actor could create a salad dressing for the sole purpose of having consumers join him in giving something back to society. And, Oprah became such a cultural force that she no longer needed a last name—that her mere endorsement of a book could send ripples through the New York Times Best Sellers List!

This is the type of power that can make a brand real, accessible and profoundly human.

#### **The Leaders of the Fifth Ward**

Think about the people who have come out of the Fifth, and who are now noted citizens of the World. Many are now deceased. Great leaders such as Barbara Jordan and Mickey Leland are clearly at the top of the list. And, the wonderful musicians that

gave the World the Fifth's form of blues, jazz and even Zydeco can resonate alongside the establishment of a new awareness of what the soul of the Fifth really is. These great people, at this point in time, are more Icons than leaders. They can and should validate who you are, and be featured prominently in everything you undertake to communicate your Creation Story.

Today, the Fifth needs people whose success and prominence in our day and age can stand in as spokespersons, indeed ambassadors, for a new and emergent Fifth. Our candidates are:

- Joe Sample, accomplished jazz musician
- George Foreman, noted sports figure turned wildly successful entrepreneur
- Dr. Ruth Simmons, educator and former president of Brown University

#### **Why Leaders are Important**

Each of these individuals represents the best of your Creation Story, and embodies your Creed in all that they do. They can take both to the outside world, and invite that world into the Fifth. They can't be drafted into your service: they have to volunteer. However, you can and must seek them out to persuade them to join your effort. In doing so it forces you to hone and distill your message, to make sure the Creation Story is valid, your Creed is confirmed, and your aspirations for establishing the proper Rituals and Icons that support them are sound.

## **6. The Sacred Words**

All noted brands form cultures around them, which is not unusual, in that cultures were, indeed, the first “brands”. And the first act of cultural creation occurred once man began to talk.

So, is it so unusual that we still, today, use language as the fundamental tool of establishing our personal identity within a group, and to show that we belong? It doesn’t matter if we are trying to connect with our neighbors from a different culture, or simply trying to navigate the confusing terms to simply order a cup of coffee at a Starbucks, words matter.

### **The Sacred Words of the Fifth Ward: *The Bloody Fifth, or the Bloody Nickel.***

To understand how powerful words can be you only have to consider this Sacred Word that is now associated with you. It undermines everything that you now are and that you seek to become. This simple term is shorthand for a time, a place, a belief system, a persona, and perhaps a defense mechanism that served the interest of a few within the former community, and that alienated the outside world. Like an echo that slowly fades, this term acts like an anchor, holding you back from the destination you want to achieve.

How do you deal with this term? President Obama recently gave us a clear example when he spoke to the relatives and loved ones of the victims of the senseless attack in the Colorado movie theatre. He refused to utter the assailant’s name.

This example is the one that the Fifth Ward has to follow. The quicker that this term is not mentioned in any context, the better. In conversation with neighbors, avoid it, and talk about the new day ahead. If a reporter wants to discuss it, refuse to acknowledge it, and change the conversation. And, when you solidify your Leaders, indoctrinate them into the same paradigm. And, while you are at it, refuse to use the terms ghetto, the ‘hood and other similar ones as well. Even in joking conversation among friends they subliminally support an idea and a place you want to escape.

And what will the new Sacred Word be? This will take time, and will require some refection, and will likely grow out of practice. It may be the Fabulous Fifth, as some suggested. Or, it may simply become the Fifth.

### **Why Sacred Words are important.**

Changing your narrative will be very difficult work. It involves “hitting on all cylinders” of your belief system. However, just as you have witnessed how pernicious a term like the Bloody Fifth is, you know in turn how powerful a new term can be. However, it will take time and effort to get there.

## **7. Our Pagans**

Pagans?

Yes, every meaningful brand has a belief system, a product, or a habit that runs 180-degree counter to what your brand is about. America fought both Fascism and

then Communism. Religions offer a way different from one of non-belief. And, Coke and Pepsi slug out across the supermarket shelves of the entire world, whether people are free or not.

### **The Pagans of the Fifth Ward.**

There are a number of them actually. There are those who do not believe anything good can come out of the Fifth because of your recent negative narrative. They are those who wish to move back to the edges of the downtown, and in doing so do not want to engage an existing community, but would rather live in smaller versions of gated suburban housing projects. And, to be frank, there are those residents of the Fifth Ward, by virtue of their self-image and the acts of disrespect they show to the neighborhood through their actions (such as dumping trash in the open drainage ditches) that are counter to your Creation Story and your Creed.

### **Why are Pagans important?**

Brands actually need pagans. They stand in stark contrast, and help you determine what you really believe, and are about. They provide you the testing ground for the strategies that you need to develop to actualize your Creed. And, they toughen you for the long fight ahead.

### **How to Manage Your Brand**

The R/UDAT has only begun the process, introducing you to the logic and components of a belief system, and giving you examples as to how this way of thinking can organize and direct your activities for the years ahead.

And, just as Rituals are important in reaffirming why someone is a part of a belief system, or a neighborhood, it is equally important for the process of managing your brand for it to be embedded within its own ritual. And, that ritual is a Brand Stewardship Committee—or BSC for short. All great consumer brands have such committees. Unlike other committees that focus more upon issues of How and How Much, BSC's focus more upon questions of Why. They are constantly revisiting, shaping, honing and refocusing the very essence of the enterprise in order to make sure that whatever they are offering is both relevant and accomplishable. Then, and only then, do they embark upon questions of How Will We Get This Accomplished, and Where Will We Get The Funds To Do It? More often than not, the discipline of drilling into the world of 'Why' will reveal pathways for accomplishing the 'How' and 'How Much', and will certainly make your case stronger for it.

For the Fifth Ward, you have the genesis of a BSC in the form of the CDC. However, the BSC representation should be broader, and perhaps independent of the day-to-day roles of the CDC. Regardless, establishing a method for making these 7 Steps alive and useful in the future of the Fifth Ward is essential.

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*\*The Seven Steps is based in part upon Patrick Hanlon's book  
Primal Branding: Creating Zealots for Your Brand, Your Company  
and Your Future.*



**IMPLEMENTATION**



In this section, the R/UDAT team will describe how the many ideas contained in this report can be realized. It articulates the overall strategy that will need to be used to tie all of the actions together. Some specific tools and methods are described that may be needed to address the range of unusual issues and challenges that must be overcome. Finally, we have provided a checklist that organizes the ideas and actions into a series of categories for easy reference.

## OVERALL STRATEGIES

The changes needed to fulfill the vision expressed in this report will require a strategy, and the concerted contributions of all of the stewards of the Fifth Ward and Lyons Avenue Corridor's future. All of the following principles should be followed; all are key to achieving the long-term success of the neighborhood.



- Select and empower an entity or coalition to coordinate the location, type and extent of all public reinvestment and all non-profit and for-profit development that can benefit from a coordinated approach – Rebuilding an entire neighborhood requires a sequential and balanced approach that achieves visible and consistent success. It is impossible and would not be desirable to accomplish everything at once. But the sequence and distribution of changes must be choreographed through a collaborative effort that attracts the combination of public, private and institutional reinvestment that shifts significant segments of Lyons Avenue and the surrounding neighborhood into a more complete, balanced, and economically sustainable direction. This can be accomplished through agreement among all of the entities using or investing public funds, and can also include the participation of institutions or even private developers who will benefit from incremental, coordinated and successful projects. This approach will also limit or avoid incentives that would produce temporary benefits but would not significantly contribute to the long term vision of an economically sustainable, mixed income district inviting to many different people, such as the concentration of one type of housing in an area, the creation of development types that are not friendly or add value to their neighbors, or tend to diminish the perception, value and brand of the entire neighborhood.
- Take care of the basics with solid, high quality improvements to the infrastructure and services in the community - Any neighborhood needs to have basic services, amenities and infrastructure if it is to be valued by its residents and create a healthy place to live, work or visit. There must be a consistently aggressive campaign that improves public property, provides sidewalks, replaces street lights, provides basic public utilities and services, and brings the programs and amenities to which all citizens are entitled.

- Move rapidly and thoroughly to restore as many blocks and land area as possible with relative low density infill development – The most extensive deterioration in the neighborhood consists of the deterioration and removal of houses, and the proliferation of empty lots that extends along so many streets and blocks. An occasional or scattered reinvestment in a single street or scattered lots will not reverse this trend. To the greatest extent practical, the housing dollars and other reinvestment funds that are coming to the Fifth Ward should be used to fill as many blocks as possible with a mix of housing types – including market rate products – to reverse trends. This is not to suggest that investments in other locations and different housing types and densities cannot be advanced in concert with the overall goal. However, if the future demand for both affordable and market rate housing are absorbed within a handful of large, multi-family projects on a few separated sites, the overall impact on the neighborhood will be limited and the ability to attract a range of residents will be diminished.
- Get the core completed – The current initiatives at the DeLuxe Theater and the Fifth Ward Jam parks are important transformational components of this civic core of the traditional Fifth Ward neighborhood. However, it is very important to complete the entire area and provide a coherent, consistent, active and populated environment for all of the activities and uses that flank these key blocks of Lyons Avenue.
- Build strategic partnerships that will be committed to the long term investments needed to transform the area's investment and create shared initiatives with neighboring districts – Fulfilling the vision within the neighborhood will require the formation of strategic partnerships with other entities. In some cases, this will include the continuation of valued, long-term partnerships already in place. In some cases, this may include the conversion of existing initiatives into long term partnerships. We have suggested that the community propose a long term commitment by the Starbucks Coffee Company to invest in a building and retail facility that would feature their products with a retail outlet, and help build up the locally-oriented products, services, and places in a key location. The neighboring districts and their organizations can be key allies in unlocking (and then managing reinvestment). Coalitions and joint projects among community associations, neighboring TIRZ districts, and non-profits may be necessary to fully leverage the opportunities at the edges of the Lyons Avenue Corridor.
- Coordinate and direct major reinvestment initiatives at the edges and gateways to the district, using all of the available tools to leverage change – The potential to reform the ends of Lyons Avenue and remake the entrances to and from the community will require focused redevelopment initiatives. To achieve the best results, specific project feasibility and development planning should be undertaken that includes forming new partnerships and coalitions, if necessary. It should also engage the City government and its agencies, and attract the scope and type of private development interests appropriate to each location.

- Rebrand the neighborhood using innovative programs and methods to shift perceptions and enhance the invitation for new development – As we have described in this report, rebranding the neighborhood requires a well-constructed campaign and approach that has many parts. The stewards of the future of the neighborhood should assemble resources and focus to identify opportunities and follow a shared strategy.
- Use the combination of existing programs, institutions and the new projects and programs to strengthen the cultural identity and the quality of life of the community – The African American community in this neighborhood must continue to create and expand those programs, institutions and events that create a shared experience and result in a continued heritage in the midst of the changes and new residents that will also become part of the neighborhood of the future.

## **SPECIFIC STRATEGIES**

### **Stewardship**

#### ***Existing Stewards***

A common thread within every successful community is the presence of individuals and/or entities willing to serve as “community stewards” – carefully managing and overseeing important elements of the community’s present and future. Since 1989, the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation (CRC) has served in a key stewardship role for the community. In 1999, the CRC was joined by another major steward, the Fifth Ward Reinvestment Zone. These stewards are complimented by many others ... the multitude of community-based churches, business owners, financial institutions, civic leaders, city and county agencies, foundations, other

non-profit organizations, corporate partners, and individuals living within the neighborhood serving as informal stewards of their street and its residents.

It is these stewards, and those that will step forward in the future, upon whose shoulders rest the successful implementation of the vision of the Fifth Ward Lyons Avenue Neighborhood. We recognize that each of you has ongoing visions and plans (formal or informal) for your respective elements of stewardship. Thus, we ask that these implementation strategies be melded with your ongoing plans, programs and projects, or in some cases, used to substantially alter your current course of direction for the overall benefit of the greater Fifth Ward.

#### ***Expanding the Stewardship***

The stewardship of the future of the neighborhood will require new coalitions, changes in the focus and missions of some existing organizations, and recruitment or even creation of special entities or ventures. Drawing on our experience from communities that have successfully navigated the challenges of neighborhood revitalization, we envision the need to assemble the following leadership groups.

- **Strategic Planning Team** – The Fifth Ward CRC has stepped forward to sponsor many strategic planning programs and initiatives over many years. It will be very helpful if this can evolve so that a formally acknowledged planning team composed of the key stakeholders can be assembled, linked to the City's Planning and other agencies, the TIRZ and other entities. Once formed, the Strategic Planning Team should meet on a regular basis as a comprehensive, forward looking steward rather than focusing on individual projects and initiatives. In the context of Houston planning, we recommend that this group seek funds and prepare a full and comprehensive neighborhood plan – perhaps through the Liveable Centers program of the Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC) similar to those conducted for other districts in the region.
- **Housing Stewards** – As we have noted in our discussion of the overall strategy, the organization of the housing development entities to ensure a coherent, coordinated approach could be an essential component of success. In one community for example, an existing non-profit housing assistance and developer provider serves as the clearing house and coordinating entity through which all of the municipal and non-profit providers share information, coordinate projects and concentrate their efforts. It is also possible to create a new entity with its own board of directors and responsibilities, designated through agreements – a kind of master housing developer who then coordinates all of the participating programs as an assigned task. Other models may be even more appropriate for Houston and the Fifth Ward, but need to be discussed, studied and a decision made about how to best proceed.

- **Development Guides** - Some of the changes will be specific redevelopment projects, often with multiple uses, properties, and participants. There will be a need to provide advisory groups that help advocate and guide the projects that emerge to meet the community goals, and to expedite funding, design and construction so that beneficial projects do not become stalled or derailed.
- **Cultural Stewards** - The cultural life of the community will be remembered and enhanced if there is an organized stewardship group that serves to coordinate ideas, seek resources, and promote the places and events linked to the community's image and identity. This may be as simple as enhancing the existing stewardship groups with a focused Fifth Ward Arts and Culture Council or similar structure that will bring a consistent focus to this dimension of the neighborhood.

### **Existing Redevelopment Tools**

As the Fifth Ward community moves forward, it is important to continue to tap and possibly expand upon the existing redevelopment entities that currently exist within the community.

### ***Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation***

The Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation (CRC) is currently celebrating 23 years of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization, stabilization and successful partnerships geared toward improving economic opportunities and community wellness. It is organized as a 501(c)(3) charitable corporation, originally under the extraordinary leadership of Rev. Harvey Clemons, Jr., and now in the extremely capable hands of Kathy Payton, President/CEO.

The Fifth Ward CRC currently has four major program areas:



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In 1999, the City approved the Fifth Ward Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ 18) under the provisions set out by Chapter 311 of the Local Texas Government Code. This public financing tool is applicable to a specific geographical area of the Fifth Ward for use in areas with blighted conditions including substantially arrested, impaired growth, substandard, slum, deteriorated structures, unsanitary, unsafe conditions and/or the general deterioration of public infrastructure.

Houston's Fifth Ward R/UDAT

area within the TIRZ may be property that is currently used for residential purposes (excluding publicly owned residential property). “Used for residential purposes” is any property occupied by a house having fewer than five living units.

The City of Houston may authorize the TIRZ board of directors to exercise any of the City’s powers with respect to the administration, management, or operation of the TIRZ except the power to:

- issue bonds;
- impose taxes or fees;
- exercise the power of eminent domain; or
- give final approval to the project plan.

A key responsibility of the TIRZ board is to prepare/adopt a project and financing plan for the zone to be approved by the city council. The types of projects included in TIRZ 18’s plan are: down payment assistance for affordable housing; redevelopment of Lyons Avenue including renovation of the DeLuxe Theater and reimbursement of retail tenant improvements; reimbursement of water, sewer, drainage or street infrastructure to developers of owner-occupied affordable housing; and public improvements to Finnegan Park.

An observation of the R/UDAT team is that TIRZ 18’s current boundaries are too narrowly defined within the Lyons Avenue Corridor. It is recommended that the board of directors consider requesting an expansion of TIRZ 18’s boundaries. This would provide expanded opportunities for financial incentives to fund affordable housing

initiatives being proposed by the private sector, as well as increase additional tax increment for future projects.

### ***Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)***

The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) is a national entity with a strong Houston presence dedicated to helping community residents transform distressed neighborhoods into healthy and sustainable communities of choice and opportunity. LISC mobilizes corporate, government and philanthropic support to provide local community development organizations with loans, grants and equity investments; local, statewide and national policy support; and technical and management assistance. Houston’s local LISC office was established in 1989, the same year as the Fifth Ward CRC. It is headed by Executive Director, Amanda Timm, who works closely with the Fifth Ward CRC.

LISC, and its affiliates, will be an important partner in identifying and working with key community stewards to bring about the change this plan envisions, particularly with the emerging cultural aspect of the community.

### ***Federal Housing Resource Tools***

As described in the Implementation Strategy, the critical federal housing resource appropriate for this effort is the potential to use the HUD Community Development Block Grant allocation the State of Texas has recently received for the Hurricane Ike Disaster Recovery Program. The funding has been granted to the State of Texas General Land Office, and the share allocated to Houston is estimated to be approximately

\$150M. \$30M of this funding is to be dedicated to the Houston Housing Authority (HHA), with the remainder to be allocated to the City of Houston Community Development Department. Making sure these resources come to the Fifth Ward and that the local non-profits are ready to partner and act to use the funding is critical to the success of the plan.

### ***Housing Development Partnerships / Mixed-Income Production Tools***

Hurricane Ike program resources are in addition to the availability of City CDBG & HOME funding as well as State allocated 4% and 9% tax credits. Further, the City has allocated funding for Workforce Housing, which can enable developers to use a shallower subsidy to fund housing for incomes above the 60% AMI ceiling for LIHTC and HOME funds.

### ***Corporate Partnerships***

Partnering with private sector corporations is not a new idea to the Fifth Ward. Many of the projects and programs that have been accomplished have come about with successful partnerships between the corporate community and the Fifth Ward CRC. Some of the corporate partners include Bank of America, BP Foundation, Brown Foundation, Chase Bank, Conoco, Frost Bank, Hewlett Packard, Houston Rockets, Pennzoil, Prudential Insurance, Sears Co., Southern Pacific Railroad, State Farm Insurance, Wal-mart, Wells Fargo, to name a few. In addition to financial gifts, they have provided such things as printing and office supplies, lawn equipment, painting supplies and equipment, special event refreshments, etc.

One of the largest corporate partnership events will occur in October (2012), when Starbucks brings to Lyons Avenue a host of volunteers to participate in an exterior renovation of 75 homes within the community and take part in creating a permanent improvement within the Fifth Ward's Lyons Avenue Corridor.

Moving forward, the Fifth Ward should apply careful thought to which corporate partners are the best match to achieve the long term plan envisioned by the Lyons Avenue R/UDAT – particularly as it concerns new initiatives such as the elevation of the cultural history of the Fifth Ward.

### ***Land Use Management Tools***

The Fifth Ward's Lyons Avenue is predominantly small-lot, single-family development on a traditional grid street pattern with a scattering of neighborhood commercial and institutional uses, most of which were built prior to 1940. As new development occurs, whether it is residential, commercial, or institutional, it is imperative that it respect the existing fabric of the Fifth Ward. Throughout the R/UDAT team meetings with residents and other stakeholders, one of the underlying themes was that new development take place in a manner and scale that fits the Fifth Ward. In response to this concern, the R/UDAT team is recommending the following land use management "tools" be added to the implementation "toolbox."

### **Lyons Avenue Area Overlay**

It is recommended that the City of Houston's Code of Ordinances, Chapter 42-Subdivisions, Development & Platting, be amended to add a "Lyons Avenue Area Overlay" not unlike the Transit Corridor Development ordinance adopted by the City (Chapter 42-401). The Lyons Avenue Area Overlay would ensure future development enhances the pedestrian experience and sense of historic community within the neighborhood, by having:

- Lot widths that are compatible with the scale of existing lot widths;
- Buildings in close proximity to pedestrian pathways and street rights-of-way;
- A continuum of buildings in close proximity to one another to maintain the interest of the pedestrian experience;
- Driveway access points sited to create the least amount of disruption to the pedestrian pathways;
- Development that provides on-street parking (but not between the rights-of-way and the building), and parking lots located to the rear or to the side of the buildings;
- Multi-story buildings within commercial areas or one-story buildings having higher ceiling heights found in historic shop fronts;
- Building materials, elevations, and window placement that are compatible with traditional development within the area;
- Fences located to the rear of the property;
- Reduced parking standards that recognize the greater dependency on transit, shared rides, walking and the limited "disposable space" available within a neighborhood having a predominance of smaller lots.

### **SPUD – Special Purpose Urban District**

The Special Purpose Urban District (SPUD) is a master planned district approved by the City Council that establishes customized development standards for a specific development area. It uses a form-based approach that allows for flexible lot sizes, urban street types, density options, reduced building setbacks, specific building types, and flexible parking and open space requirements. These form-based aspects are contained in a "pattern book" that is submitted to the City's Development Office. This provides increased predictability and flexibility in a district with multiple owners. Like other "special districts," it is managed by a local non-profit corporation, representing a majority of property owners within the district. Eligible areas are those containing from 10 – 100 acres located in rail transit corridors, mixed –use centers, and/or urban neighborhoods transition.

The SPUD could be an appropriate vehicle to use within the Fifth Ward in locations where mixed-use development is planned. Funding for the district would require a mix of funding mechanisms, such as 380 Agreements, tax-increment set asides, and voluntary contributions. Currently the SPUD Coordinator is Sherri Collison with BetterHouston.org

### **Municipal Management Districts**

Management Districts are special districts created by the Texas legislature. These districts are empowered to promote, develop, encourage and maintain employment, commerce, transportation, housing, tourism, recreation, arts, entertainment, economic development, safety and the public welfare. Management Districts are given the power to finance their operations by issuing bonds or other obligations,



payable in whole or in part from ad valorem taxes, assessments, impact fees, or other funds of the District to provide improvements and services. Management Districts may levy a tax only after holding an election within the district; however, no tax levy or assessment can be placed upon a single-family detached residence or multifamily development of less than 13 units. These districts are intended to supplement, not supplant, existing public services. The district does not have eminent domain powers. In the City of Houston there are more than 20 Management Districts, including the Downtown, East Downtown, East End, Greater Northside, and Greater Southwest Management Districts. The East End Management District funds services by an assessment of commercial property owners and multi-unit housing properties containing 13 or more units within district boundaries. Assessments are based on the assessed value of real property and are collected by Harris County. Annual assessments hover around \$1,600,000 (the district is quite large). Basic district services include a security patrol in partnership with Harris County Precinct 6 Constable and key property owners. Other projects include an award winning graffiti abatement program, a litter and dumpsite cleanup program, East End Streetscape, Urban Village Project, Workforce Development, Green Initiatives, and other programs.

Creating a Municipal Management District for a targeted portion of the Fifth Ward could be beneficial for development desiring elevated improvements or services not necessarily desired by all of the Fifth Ward. If all of the R/UDAT study area were to become a part of a Municipal Management District, it could serve as a mechanism to

finance such things as additional trash pickup, wayfinding signage, cultural heritage plaques, etc.

### **Property Deed Restrictions / Covenants**

In the absence of zoning, many neighborhoods across the City of Houston are “protected” by property deed restrictions or covenants. These often restrict the use of property, most often to single family, and uses that appear compatible at time of development. They frequently include: the distance that a structure must be set back from property lines, street lines, or lot lines; size of a lot or the size, type and number of structures that may be built on the lot; orientation of a structure; and/or what type fences require a building permit.

Under Chapter 212 of the Texas Local Government Code and Article XV of Chapter 10, Sections 10-551 through 10-555, of the City Code, the City Attorney’s Deed Restriction Enforcement Team is authorized to enforce, by suit for injunction, certain deed restrictions that affect subdivisions within the City.

Currently very few if any properties within the Fifth Ward are protected by deed restrictions. Thus, the R/UDAT recommends that monies be set aside to incentivize new developments to be protected by deed restrictions to insure long-term compatibility of land uses within the development.

## ***Financing Tools***

### **380 Agreements**

Article 380 Agreements (reference to Chapter 380, Texas Local Government Code), is another mechanism by which the City of Houston can foster economic development within Fifth Ward's Lyons Avenue. Under a 380 Agreement the City may provide funds, loans, city personnel, and city services for promotion and encouragement of economic development. It is required to serve the purpose of promoting state or local economic development by stimulating business and commercial activity within the city, eliminating unemployment or underemployment or expanding transportation facilities. Unlike tax abatements which are limited to 10 years, 380 Agreements do not have term limits. The 380 Agreement can also be used to refund or abate city sales tax. This was the financing vehicle proposed for the controversial Walmart site at I-10 and Yale within the Heights neighborhood (proposed to provide an estimated \$6 million in reimbursements to the developer related to developer provided improvements). In contrast to the Heights, the Fifth Ward may welcome a 380 Agreement that brings a major retailer within proximity to the community. It is the R/UDAT team's view that such an Agreement could be the financial catalyst for making something like this a reality for the Fifth Ward.

### **Tax Abatement Ordinance**

Under the City of Houston Tax Abatement Ordinance (Chapter 44 of the Code of Ordinances), companies who are planning to make significant property improvements and create new permanent jobs may be eligible to apply for an abatement of property taxes on those improvements. Applicants must meet certain minimum investment

standards and must be willing to enter into contractual agreement with the taxing jurisdiction. A public hearing and a vote of approval by City Council is required. This abatement is for a maximum of 10 years. The City's Department of Planning & Development administers this program.

### **Revenue Bond Financing**

The City of Houston has established special purpose corporations with the authority to issue private activity revenue bonds for large capital investments. One of those corporations is the "Houston Health Facilities Development Corporation." It provides financing for qualified health facilities. Eligible projects must improve the adequacy, cost and accessibility of health care with financing costs limited to land, buildings, and equipment. Eligible borrowers are limited to non-profit corporations. The City's Housing and Community Development Department administers this program. (NOTE: These programs may be subject to the marketability of the bonds.)

## ***Historic Preservation Tools***

### **Texas Heritage Tourism Partnership Grants**

The Texas Historical Commission offers the "Texas Heritage Tourism Partnership Grants." These are one-year grants to support the development of high-quality collaborative products and promotions that increase awareness of the rich cultural and historic resources found in Texas and strengthen regional heritage tourism. Potential projects are those that provide interpretation and promotion of cultural and historic resources through printed materials and publications, interpretive, promotional, or wayfinding

signage, website development, exhibit development, and public education and training programs. Grants are open to cultural, historical, or tourism organizations with active tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) or Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code or a government entity of the State of Texas.

If adequately funded, it would be a perfect match for the Fifth Ward. It is home to Houston's second housing project for African Americans, the Kelly Court Housing Project, opened after World War II; Peacock Records, a black-owned recording company, started in the Fifth Ward; C. F. Smith Electric Company, one of the state's early licensed electrical-contracting companies; Finnigan Park, the second public park for blacks in Houston, opened in the community in the postwar years; The Julia C. Hester House, a black community center, a prominent part of Fifth Ward; and well-known residents, Barbara Jordan, Mickey Leland, Arnett Cobb, Milton Larkin, Joe Sample and the Crusaders; and many more.

### ***Railroad Crossing Mitigation Tools***

The Fifth Ward is greatly impacted by trains blocking traffic for long periods of time along two sets of north/south train tracks. One is just west of Waco Street and the other just east of Lockwood Drive.

We initially felt that the Texas Transportation Code (§ 471.007) could effectively address this highly disruptive occurrence. It prohibits trains from blocking a street, railroad crossing, or public highway for more than 10 minutes. Violators are guilty

of a misdemeanor and punishable by a fine of not less than \$100 dollars or more than \$300 dollars. However, a past Attorney General's Opinion indicates that the Texas statute is preempted by the federal statutes controlling interstate commerce and railroad safety. However, the Opinion indicated that state provisions pertaining strictly to road blockages that impact safety issues such as local law enforcement and emergency vehicle access may not be preempted.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) does recommend that railroads work cooperatively with local officials to eliminate or minimize the impact of blocked crossings wherever possible. It suggests that a railroad might:

- Make operational changes such as the time of day it services its customers or where it stops its trains to make crew changes;
- Hold a train outside the congested area until it can move through the grade crossing without stopping;
- Improve management of rail yard traffic to accommodate train movements more efficiently;
- Reduce the length of trains;
- Add tracks, lengthen sidings, or make other rail infrastructure improvements; and/or
- Create grade separations (not feasible with these track crossings)
- Any solutions to reducing the delays created by these trains will require substantial partnership with the Mayor's office, and other highly influential elected officials, including potentially congressional offices.

## ***Nuisance and Code Enforcement Tools***

### **BUILDINGS AND NEIGHBORHOOD PROTECTION**

Chapter 10 of the City of Houston's Code of Ordinances contains a number of elements that address "nuisances." In Section 10-451, nuisances are generally "whatever is dangerous to human health or welfare, or whatever renders the ground, the water, the air, or food a hazard to human health is hereby declared to be a nuisance."

Much of what the Fifth Ward is confronted with includes the lack of property upkeep combined with neglect within the public realm (the streets, sidewalks, etc.) Throughout many areas of the Fifth Ward there can be seen trash, abandoned cars, half demolished buildings, vacant buildings, vegetative debris within the yards and along the streets, etc. This sends a message to residents, businesses and visitors that no one cares about the Fifth Ward. Nothing could be further from the truth, but unfortunately efforts to get ahead of these conditions are insufficient using traditional services provided by the City.

The R/UDAT team recommends that all of the sources cited above be closely examined to see how they might be used to address the above nuisances. Fortunately, as new development takes place there will be a reduction in some of the nuisances, but we don't believe you should wait for this to occur. Perhaps one of the first steps is to persuade the City that the Fifth Ward needs more frequent large trash and debris pick up than the more affluent neighborhoods within the City.





## CHECKLIST

This is a checklist of actions that would implement recommendations within this report, organized in the categories described as “Keys to the Future”.

### CATEGORY I: ESSENTIALS

#### Security: Personal and Family

- ☐ Increase housing density to add more eyes on the street.
- ☐ Enhance pedestrian infrastructure.
- ☐ Create more quality gathering spots.
- ☐ Institute a community-based solution to keeping the streets clean.

#### Food: High Quality, Reasonable Prices, and Nearby

- ☐ Outreach to markets in the Denver Harbor area (attempt to bridge the cultural divide.)
- ☐ Consider repositioning or transforming the Lyons Supermarket.
- ☐ Increase the availability of locally grown produce from community gardens.
- ☐ Create a program for mobile food vendors around the Jam park in conjunction with events or on a regular basis.
- ☐ Explore the possibility of locating a Walmart to the west of Lyons.
- ☐ Integrate with DeLuxe Theater public attraction.
- ☐ Stage “Eat the Garden” days at the community gardens to demonstrate healthy practices/menus.
- ☐ Ensure that the dirt is not toxic (i.e. lead and petrol).

#### Education: Equipping All Learners for the Future

- ☐ Forge partnerships with university departments in the arts, STEM, and education generally.
- ☐ Consider foundation support for innovative programs (Kresge, for example).
- ☐ Build an early childhood education infrastructure and after-school programs.
- ☐ Explore partnerships with Teach for America and other connectors.
- ☐ Open up possibilities for adult learners and group support.
- ☐ Teach skills on par with college prep.

#### Wellness

- ☐ Encourage community involvement with the pending health research center.
- ☐ Create a safe and walkable environment.
- ☐ Incorporate food issues and education into Wellness initiatives.
- ☐ Stage “Get Out and Walk” days, with or without a cause (like MS, etc.) to promote health and neighborliness...particularly from the core of the Fifth to Denver Harbour.

## CATEGORY II: BUILDING THE COMMUNITY

### New Housing Prototypes

- ☐ Leverage U.S. HUD 2011 Community Development Block Grant Funds.
- ☐ Preserve at-risk affordable housing that may be timing out of programs.
- ☐ Invest in new multi-family developments (see the New Hope project).
- ☐ Enhance the design and construction of new single family residences in concert with private developers (note: Parra holdings).
- ☐ Land bank parcels and hold; provide for proper maintenance.
- ☐ Secure deed restrictions in exchange for payment tied to particular housing typologies/quality standards.

### Neighborhood Maintenance and Infrastructure

- ☐ Create a more aggressive address to abandoned and/or distressed properties.
- ☐ Promote neighborhood clean-up days to generate personal investment in the area.
- ☐ Install enhanced pedestrian infrastructure (lighting, sidewalks, signage, drainage)

### Employment: Training and Opportunity Building

- ☐ Create opportunities for engagement with the jobs of the future and the skills required.
- ☐ Consider integrating new digital skills into even conventional trades training.
- ☐ Enhance the local construction workforce skill sets to build the suggested homes.
- ☐ Consider a business incubation center on Lyons.
- ☐ Seek out retail development for the Lyons/I 10 zone (for example, a large “big box” store can easily employ 400 full and part time people, and the subsequent stores they then attract will add around of 400 more.)

### Transportation and Access

- ☐ Start a shuttle service to key locations of interest/need for those without other means of transport.
- ☐ Consider enhanced bus shelters that are stronger indicators of the Fifth Ward.
- ☐ Ensure linkages to downtown and other areas of employment.

### CATEGORY III: AMENITIES AND PROJECTS

#### Recreation, Parks and Public Facilities

- ☐ Make Lyons a model of pedestrian/vehicular infrastructure (lighting, sidewalks, signage, drainage.)
- ☐ Promote curb parking on Lyons, beginning with pending commercial areas.
- ☐ Consider integration of site specific art projects into the parks.

#### Buy Local

- ☐ Consider an incubator for local emergent businesses.
- ☐ Open a coffee shop in Lyons Village as a test.
- ☐ Improve or replace Lyons Supermarket.

#### Signature Projects

- ☐ Open a thoroughly programmed DeLuxe Theater complex- concentrate on continual use, not just events.
  - ☐ Acquire adjacent super market site if possible.
  - ☐ Create a community “bridge-building” center with DH on the east end of Lyons at Sakowitz; acquire site or land swap, if possible.
  - ☐ Explore a possible large retail opportunity on the west side of Lyons beyond the
- 59.

#### Signature Events

- ☐ First Friday type street festivals on Lyons to increase awareness of the Fifth.
- ☐ Create a Walter Mosley Theater for New Plays series to promote literacy.
- ☐ Celebration of BBQ in the area by Fifth Ward vendors.
- ☐ Institute a Barbara Jordan annual symposia on civic leadership.
- ☐ Coordinate programming with Texas Southern University assets.

## **CATEGORY IV: MOVE FORWARD, RESPECT THE PAST**

### **Embrace Demographic Change**

- ☐ Open a community/digital center on Lyons at Sankowitz with Starbucks support.
- ☐ Reach out to Denver Harbor leaders for mutual buy-in on shared projects.
- ☐ Integrate a language center into the community/digital center.

### **Elevate the Legacy of the Fifth Ward**

- ☐ Capture oral histories and visuals of the Fifth Ward immediately.
- ☐ Create a book on the history of the Fifth Ward.
- ☐ Compile a CD of Fifth Ward music to be sold in Starbucks.

### **Be Connected**

- ☐ Forge strong linkages with local university programs in education and STEM.
- ☐ Form partnerships with other TIRZ programs adjacent to the Fifth Ward.





## **PROCESS AND PARTICIPANTS**

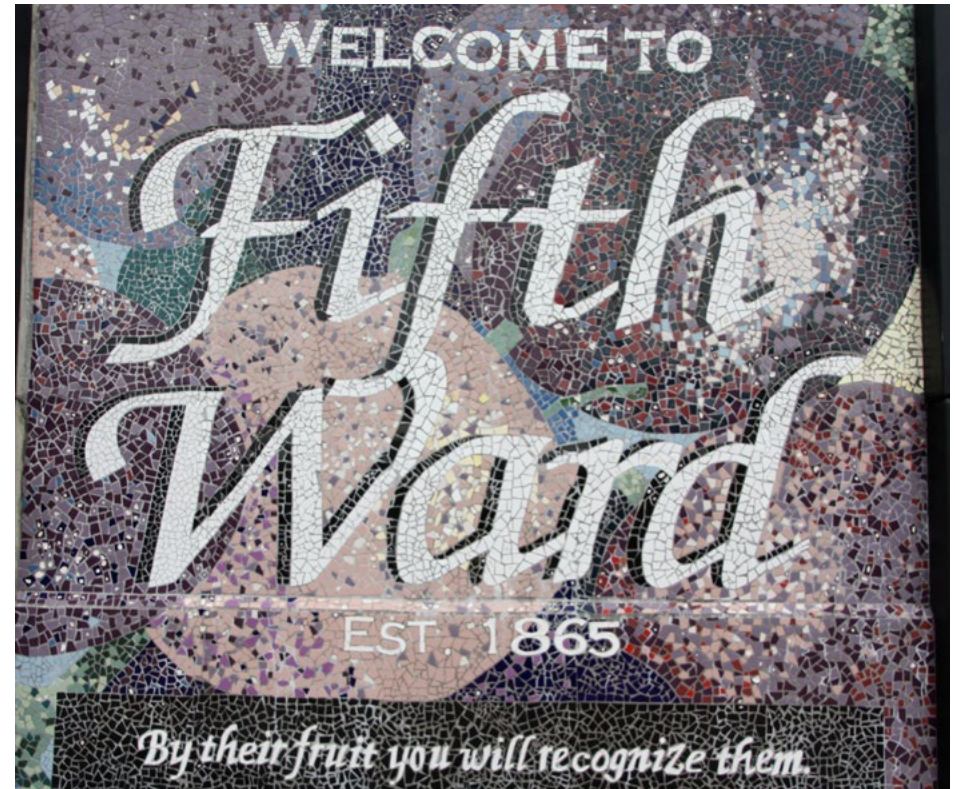
## THE LYON'S AVENUE R/UDAT

In February 2012, a community coalition led by the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation submitted an application to the American Institute of Architects for a Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) project. As the application stated:

*"The ultimate goal of Fifth Ward CRC is to create a positive image of the community that attracts investment from homebuyers, homeowners, business, and government. This investment supports and leads to the development of a healthy community – a place where it makes economic and social sense for people to invest time, money, and energy. In most cases, this is a challenge because resources are inadequately matched with needs. The impact of Fifth Ward CRC's efforts appears minimal because the measurable achievements, in relation to what still remains to be done, is disproportionate. This will continue to be the case if additional financing alternatives and resources are not utilized and made available to communities like Fifth Ward. Current indicators of distress in Fifth Ward include negative physical and social indicators."*

The application was accepted, and Steve Cecil, AIA, ASLA, was selected to lead the R/UDAT team.

In April 2012, Cecil and AIA staff conducted an initial visit to the community to determine the project scope and identify the expertise needed for the project. The



initial visit included tours of the project area, meetings with city staff, institutional and neighborhood representatives, and key stakeholders. The goal of the process was to identify the community's values and vision for the future of the area, and develop a strategy and set of actions to realize that vision moving forward. The project scope described the main focus of the effort as follows:

*"The R/UDAT team will undertake a 4-day charrette, in collaboration with a broad spectrum of local stakeholders, design and planning professionals to re-envision the district and set the stage for major change. The team will be composed of individuals with combined backgrounds in urban design, architecture, landscape architecture,*

*urban development and revitalization, environmental design and community branding.”*

the key ideas represented in this report. The team’s final report contains a narrative summary of team’s findings.

A team of 8 national experts from across the country was assembled for the project. The interdisciplinary team was selected by the AIA and customized to fit the key issues present in the community. They included architects, urban designers, economic and finance experts, planners, landscape architects and others. (For more information on the team members, see the team roster). This was not another team of consultants. Consultants work for somebody. R/UDAT works for everybody. The team’s mission was to serve the public interest by observing local conditions, listening to the community’s ideas and formulating their best professional advice about the current issues and opportunities facing the area. Team members were deliberately selected from places outside the community, were not paid for their service, and were prohibited from pursuing business development opportunities that might result from the process. They engaged in a public service on behalf of the host community.

From July 27-30th, the team engaged in an intensive community ‘charrette’ process with residents and stakeholders of the Lyons Avenue corridor and the Fifth Ward. The process included tours of the project area, targeted meetings with public officials and stakeholders, a public workshop, and studio design sessions. Hundreds of residents and local stakeholders participated in the process. At the conclusion of the charrette, the team presented its recommendations at an open public meeting, highlighting



### **Steven Cecil, AIA, ASLA**

Steven Cecil AIA, ASLA, is the team leader for this project.

As the founding principal of The Cecil Group, Inc., Steven brings over twenty-five years of professional experience to the firm, including urban design, planning, landscape architecture, and architecture projects throughout the

United States and abroad. His practice brings creative solutions to planning and design challenges that are attentive to their cultural, environmental and community context. Steven brings a commitment and special skills in community participation as a dimension of the firm's successful planning and design projects. Prior to forming The Cecil Group, he was a founding principal of Cecil & Rizvi, Inc. and served as Director of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture at both CBT Architects and SOM/Boston. Mr. Cecil's academic contributions include teaching assignments in both the urban design and urban planning programs at Harvard's Graduate School of Design.

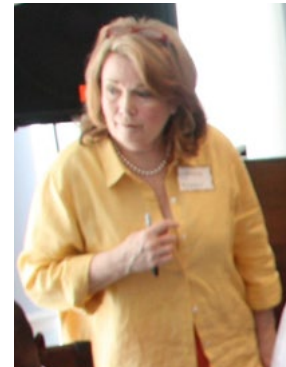


### **Ken Bowers, AICP**

Ken Bowers, AICP is the Deputy Director of the Department of City Planning in Raleigh, North Carolina. Prior to this position, Ken was with Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, based in New York City. His responsibilities with the City include management and oversight of the Long Range

Planning and Zoning programs, as well as supporting the Planning Commission. He served as Project Director for the 2030 Comprehensive Plan and the recently completed Capital Boulevard Corridor Study. Ken holds a Bachelor's of Science in

Physics from North Carolina State University and a Master's of Regional Planning from UNC-Chapel Hill. In addition to being certified by the American Institute of Certified Planners, he is a licensed Professional Planner in the State of New Jersey.



### **Connie Cooper, FAICP**

Connie Cooper , FAICP, is the President of Cooper Consulting Company, Inc. in Dallas. Connie is the former national president of the American Planning Association, and has 35 years of experience in planning and community development at the state, county, and

local levels. This has included extensive experience throughout the US as a principal participant in the areas of urban redevelopment, strategic planning; community goal setting and visioning; comprehensive planning; economic development; zoning and subdivision; housing; transportation; market research; land development; community relations; and intergovernmental cooperation. In addition, as a planning director in the public sector, Ms. Cooper's experience has included major responsibilities in the management of planning programs that have become the cornerstones of Shelby and Jefferson Counties' (Alabama) planning programs.





### **L'Merchie Frazier**

L'Merchie Frazier is the Director of Education at the Museum of African American History Boston and Nantucket. L'Merchie is a visual and performance artist /educator /consultant and is a native of Jacksonville, Florida now based in Boston. A mother of two sons and

one daughter, L'Merchie has been active in the New England community for over twenty years. As a visual artist she is best known for her highly skilled hand crafted beaded jewelry, fiber and metal sculptures, and mixed media installations.

L'Merchie attended the City College of New York, the University of Hartford, and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. Currently she is Director of Education at the Museum of Afro-American History, Boston. She was formerly Education Director of Arts Are Academic serving several Boston cultural institutions, inclusive of the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, the Museum of Fine Arts, the Huntington Theater and the Boston Public Schools promoting art literacy for students and teachers across disciplines. She has taught African American Art and Culture at the Boston Community Academy for at-risk students. She teaches courses in cultural diversity; principal teacher of visual and performance art for the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists and workshop instructor for the Fuller Museum of Art in Brockton, MA. Certified as an artist educator by the Kennedy Center Artists as Educators program, she is on the roster of the Massachusetts Cultural Council Directory for Events and Residences; served on the MCC Folk Arts Review Panel and

the First Night 2001 Review Panel. She has served as director of urban art camps in Greater Boston. She was commissioned by Legacy Productions for PBS as Art Curator for Black America Facing the Millennium. She was honored as a teacher for TPS Adult Literacy in Hartford, CT.



### **James (Arthur) Jemison**

James (Arthur) Jemison is the Deputy Undersecretary of Housing for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Deputy Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Directly and through its quasi-public agencies, DHCD partners with cities and towns, development interests and non-profits to revitalize neighborhoods and plan, develop and retain affordable housing in the Commonwealth.

Before joining the Patrick-Murray Administration, Arthur spent 18 years in the public and private sectors, in both planning and development consultant roles. Most recently, Arthur was a Senior Project Manager at GLC Development Resources a planning and development consultancy in Boston, where he managed major-mixed use, mixed-income planning initiatives including the Jackson Square (Jamaica Plain & Roxbury), Whittier Street Health Center (Roxbury) and the Boston Renaissance Charter School (Hyde Park). He also was a team member for the successful Boston Housing Authority Old Colony HOPE VI application in South Boston. Arthur also

led planning efforts in several Commonwealth Gateway Cities, including the South End neighborhood of Springfield, now a recipient US HUD Choice Neighborhoods planning grant award. Arthur has a BA in Social Thought and Political Economy from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; and a Master of City Planning degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



**Wellington "Duke" Reiter, FAIA**

Wellington "Duke" Reiter, FAIA is an architect and urban designer. He is the Senior Vice President, of the Arizona State University Foundation and Managing Director of the SOLUTIONS initiative. Duke was the President of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 2008 to 2010.

Previous to that he was the Dean of the College of Design at Arizona State University. In addition to his academic role at ASU, he was responsible for conceptualizing and creating the University's new downtown Phoenix Campus, which will accommodate some 15,000 students, uniting academic and civic agendas to create a model of first-rate urban design. During his time at ASU he founded the Phoenix Urban Research Laboratory and a graduate program in sustainable Real Estate Development. He has been the recipient of considerable recognition from the design, art, business, and political communities including the Arizona Architects Medal from the AIA.



**Terry Shook, FAIA**

Terry Shook, FAIA, founding partner and Principal of Shook/Kelly, an architecture and branding firm with offices in Charlotte and Los Angeles. Charles Terry Shook, FAIA, is a founding partner and principal of Shook Kelley, a Perception Design firm specializing in strategic

consulting services, including branding, architecture, communication design and interior design. Mr. Shook serves as principal-in-charge of a multi-million-dollar New Urban planning and design group, with an emphasis on urban retail design and main street development. As one of the nation's top experts in district planning and Placemaking, he has been recognized as a vanguard in the movement to return meaning to the urban environment.

Mr. Shook is an annual lecturer in the Professional Development Program at Harvard University and speaks regularly for the Urban Land Institute on topics relating to urban design. He is a member of the International Downtown Association and the Urban Land Institute, and was recently elevated to the College of Fellows, the highest honor given by the American Institute of Architects.



### **Arturo Vasquez, AIA**

Arturo Vasquez, AIA is an accomplished architect, urban designer and educator with extensive knowledge in architecture and urban planning history and design theory. His built projects have received numerous awards and he has lectured, taught and spoken at prominent

colleges and universities locally and abroad. He is a Co-Founder/Executive Director of the Chicago Integrated School of Building (InSB), and an Advanced Architectural Design Faculty, Thesis Representative/Thesis Studio Instructor at the Boston Architectural College (BAC).

Arturo has over twenty seven years of experience integrating design, master planning, and urban design for healthcare, educational, and cultural mixed-use projects. His experience includes working with private and public sector clients, civic institutions, community-based organizations, non-profits and city agencies. Arturo is the Principal/Founder of SAS/ Design, Inc. and is a Registered Architect in New York State and Massachusetts.

### **Joel Mills, Director, AIA Center for Communities by Design**

Joel Mills serves as Director of the American Institute for Architects' Center for Communities by Design. The Center is a leading provider of pro bono technical assistance and participatory planning for community sustainability. Through its design assistance programs, the Center has worked in 55 communities across 32 states since 2005. In 2010, the Center was named Organization of the Year by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) for its impact on communities and contributions to the field.

Joel's career in civic health and governance spans over 19 years, and includes community-based technical assistance, process design, facilitation and training across a number of fields. During the 1990s, Mr. Mills spent several years supporting international democratization initiatives by providing technical assistance to parliaments, political parties, local governments, civic and international organizations. His scope of work included constitutional design and governing systems, voter and civic education, election monitoring and administration, political party training and campaign strategy, collaborative governance, human rights and civil society capacity building. His work has been featured on ABC World News Tonight, Nightline, CNN, The Next American City, Smart City Radio, The National Civic Review, Ecostructure Magazine, The Washington Post, and dozens of other media sources.

### **Erin Simmons Director, AIA Design Assistance**

Erin Simmons is the Director of Design Assistance at the Center for Communities by Design at the American Institute of Architects in Washington, DC. Her primary role

at the AIA is to provide process expertise, facilitation and support for the Center's Sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT) and Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) programs. In this capacity, she works with AIA components, members, partner organizations and community members to provide technical design assistance to communities across the country. Through its design assistance programs, the AIA has worked in 200 communities across 47 states. In 2010, the Center was named Organization of the Year by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) for its impact on communities and contributions to the field.

To date, Erin has served as staff lead on over 55 design assistance teams. Prior to joining the AIA, Erin worked as senior historic preservationist and architectural historian for an environmental and engineering firm in Georgia, where she practiced preservation planning, created historic district design guidelines and zoning ordinances, conducted historic resource surveys, and wrote property nominations for the National Register of Historic Places. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Florida State University and a Master's degree in Historic Preservation from the University of Georgia.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Houston R/UDAT represents the product of many contributions from across the Fifth Ward and broader Houston community. The R/UDAT team would like to thank all of the residents and community stakeholders who participated in the four-day charrette process. In particular, the R/UDAT team would like to thank the following individuals and organizations, without whom the project would not have been possible.

**THE R/UDAT LOCAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

The R/UDAT Steering Committee represents a broad cross-section of the community, and engaged in a number of efforts to make this process possible. The team would like to thank them for their numerous contributions to the process.

<b>Kathy Payton</b> - Fifth Ward CRC	<b>Jennifer Holmes</b> - Julia C. Hester House/
<b>Harvey Clemons</b> - TIRZ 18/Resident	Resident
<b>Steve Fairfield</b> - Covenant Community	<b>Tory Gunnsolley</b> - Houston Housing Auth.
Capital	<b>Lynn Henson</b> - City of Houston Planning
<b>Frank Liu Jr.</b> - Intown Homes	<b>Venita Ray</b> - Planner
<b>Algenita Davis</b> - Habitat for Humanity	<b>John Riddington</b> - Architect
<b>Vernus Swisher</b> - Career and Recovery	<b>Crystal Benivedes</b> - Houston Arts Alliance
Resources	<b>Landon Taylor</b> - Dept. of Neighborhoods
<b>Kim Slaughter</b> - Metro	<b>Edward Loche</b> - Business Owner
<b>Sandra Dodd</b> - Centerpoint Energy	<b>Jennifer Graves</b> - Resident
<b>Ian Rosenberg</b> - FWCRC Board Member	<b>Brian Case</b> - Starbucks

**THE FIFTH WARD COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (CRC)**  
The Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation (CRC) served as the lead organization for the local steering committee efforts, authoring the application to R/UDAT, conducting outreach to the community, publicizing the event, and coordinating the local schedule. Fifth Ward CRC’s President and CEO, **Kathy Flanagan-Payton**, served as the lead point of contact and project organizer. The team would also like to thank the Fifth Ward CRC’s Board Chair **Michael Emerson** for his support of the process. In addition, several staff members of the Fifth Ward CRC played important roles in supporting the process, including **Rosalind Walton, Wayne Fowkes, Gregory Austin**, and **Valerie Lee**.

**UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

The team’s work was supported by a group of university students from local university architectural programs. These students made numerous contributions to the team’s work. They include the following individuals:

<b>Prairie View A &amp; M</b>	<b>University of Houston</b>
<b>Dominique Washington</b>	<b>Stephanie Balbin</b>
<b>Keiana Mitchell</b>	<b>Angela Palmer</b>
<b>Lauren Griggs</b>	
<b>Nenaji Agbolabori</b>	

**THE CITY OF HOUSTON**

Several city departments participated in the R/UDAT process, offering the team specific details on current revitalization and planning efforts across the city. In

particular, the team would like to thank **Alfred “Doc” Henson**, Ph. D., from the Housing and Community Development Department, for his help collecting existing data and information on the Fifth Ward neighborhood.

## THE VICTUAL

The Victual at Pleasant Hill Senior Apartments hosted the R/UDAT public workshop and key stakeholder meetings, as well as the team’s final presentation. The team would like to thank them for generously opening their doors to the public and serving as a convenient and welcoming community gathering place.

## THE DESIGN COMMUNITY

The R/UDAT team is thankful for the many contributions to the process from representatives of the local design community. In particular, the team would like to thank **Antoine Bryant**, NOMA, Assoc. AIA, and **Timothy Mose**, Assoc. AIA, NOMA, CPMP, for their contributions and support of the process.

## GENSLER

The Houston offices of Gensler generously hosted the R/UDAT teams studio sessions, and the team would like to thank Gensler for their warm hospitality and **Timothy Mose**

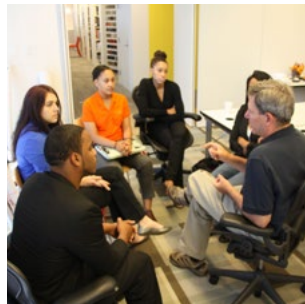
for leading the Gensler effort. The team would also like to thank the following staff at Gensler for their participation in the studio sessions and the many contributions they made to the process: **Lindsey Slay**, **Christina Garvie**, **Brandon Henducks**, **Steffany Orjuela**, **Mick Markham**, and **Brenda Jimenez**.

## CHASM ARCHITECTURE

The R/UDAT team would like to thank **Nathaniel Clark** from Chasm Architecture in Atlanta for his work with the team during the studio sessions.

## THE CECIL GROUP

**Emily Innes** and **Kiersten Mailler**, staff at the Cecil Group in Boston, provided critical project coordination and support to the R/UDAT effort in the preceding months of the project.



## AIA HOUSTON

The R/UDAT team would like to thank AIA Houston for its support of the process, and thank Executive Director **Rusty Bienvenue** and President **Perry Seeberger**, AIA, for their participation.

## ASLA

The team would also like to thank **Riley Anderson**, ASLA, the Houston/Gulf Coast Section Chair of ASLA, for his participation in the process and efforts to engage others in the design community prior to the charrette.

