GULFTON PROMISE

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I.   NEED FOR THE PROJECT

A.   Description of Gulfton Promise Neighborhood

Neighborhood Centers Inc. proposes to develop the Gulfton neighborhood in Southwest Houston as a Promise Neighborhood. Defined as Census Tracts 4211, 4212, 4213, 4214, 4215 and 4327, this 3.7 square mile neighborhood is bordered by the City of Bellaire (east), Richmond Ave. (north), the Southwest Fwy. (west) and Bellaire Blvd. (south). It covers the southern part of the Lee High School attendance zone, and 900 or 45% of Lee's students reside here.
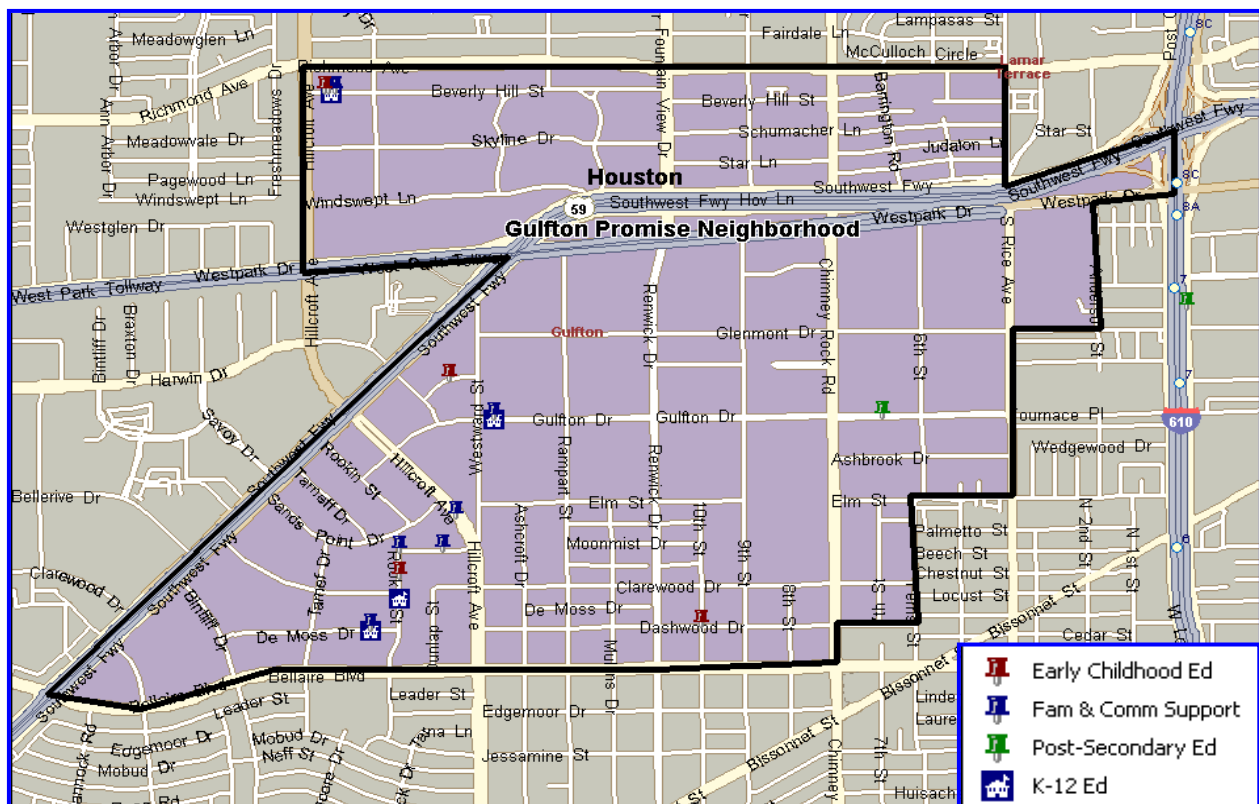
With a 2000 population of 53,754, Gulfton is one of the most densely populated (14,554 individuals per square mile - 4.3 times that of the City of Houston) and racially/ethnically diverse (67% Hispanic, 10% Black, 15% White and 6% Asian) neighborhoods in Houston.

Over the last 20 years, the Gulfton neighborhood has undergone dramatic demographic changes, transitioning from being mostly White and middle-class to Hispanic and working-poor.

Most new residents are recent immigrants from Mexico and Central America who moved to the U.S. permanently for employment and educational opportunities not found in their home countries. According to census data, foreign-born residents are 58% of the neighborhood population (22% countywide), and 87% of the foreign-born are not U.S. citizens.

B.   Neighborhood needs, assets and gaps in services, infrastructure or opportunities

English is not the primary language spoken by almost three-quarters (74%) of the neighborhood (36% countywide) and almost half of the adult population have less than a high school education (48% vs. 25% countywide). Per capita income in the neighborhood is $12,727 or 59% of the county per capita, and 40% of children under age 18 are below poverty, compared with 20% countywide. Other indicators of neighborhood distress include: a household 5-year mobility rate of 75% (53% citywide); a teen birth rate of 23% (17% citywide); a childhood immunization rate of 68% (72% citywide); a violent crime rate per 1,000 residents of 15.3, 33% higher than citywide; and student mobility rates of 35% (22% citywide).

As much as parents desire that their children do well in school, neighborhood youth in high school are often expected to assume more responsibility for family child care and income. Daily enticements for these teens to use drugs and/or engage in crime as an easy escape from these pressures contribute to Gulfton (77081) being one of the 15 Texas zip codes with the state's highest juvenile delinquency rates.

Lee High School, a persistently lowest performing school and core component of our project, has been part of the Gulfton neighborhood for almost 50 years and serves an ethnically and linguistically-diverse, low-income population of 1,928 students grades 9-12. Lee students represent 70 countries, speak 40 languages and include many highly mobile immigrant and refugee students (42% mobility). Eighty-five percent speak a language other than English as their

dominant or only language and 42% of students are identified as having limited-English proficiency. One in every five students has been in the United States less than 3 years. The student body is 78% Latino, 14% African or African-American, 4% Anglo and 5% Asian. Approximately 92% of students qualify for the federal meals program.

While Lee's academic progress across the last five years has been significant – the percentage of students passing TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) each year has grown exponentially with a 60% increase in the passing rate in Reading/Language Arts, 300% in math, 75% in social studies and 300% in science - the growth has not been sufficient to consistently meet Adequate Yearly Progress standards. With only a 41% regular graduation rate (vs. 68% district-wide), a 34% drop-out rate (vs. 19%) and 85% of students identified as 'at-risk' of dropping out, Lee is still one of the lowest performing high schools in Houston ISD (based on Texas Education Agency 2008-2009 data). Lee was ranked 133 out of 140 Houston high schools on overall performance ratings compiled by the independent child advocacy group Children at Risk. Lee's students and teachers continue to struggle with the challenges associated with second-language acquisition and the impact on student academic outcomes.

Gaps in services, infrastructure or opportunities

As the Gulfton community is widely recognized as having high levels of poverty and need, there are considerable resources available at no or very low cost to families, including: health and medical care; family planning and prenatal care services; Women, Infants & Children (WIC) services; immigration services and related legal assistance; adult education and employment services; crime prevention education; intervention programs for at-risk youth, and; community parks and recreation programs, many of which offer the Summer Food Service program. However, barriers such as limited public transportation, lack of awareness of available

services, confusing eligibility requirements and – especially for those without legal immigration status – fear, continue to limit families' access to services.

Should both parents need to work, or if one wants to obtain more education while the other works, residents often face the problem of finding affordable and appropriate child care. While waitlists for subsidized childcare (funded through the Child Care and Development Block Grant) have in recent years become shorter, or in some cases nonexistent, the eligibility requirements can be complex and the application process difficult – particularly for those with limited English skills. Furthermore, while most area child care providers are licensed or registered, quality of care varies substantially and government monitoring is minimal.

Other service gaps identified by neighborhood residents and Head Start parents include: quality, affordable youth and afterschool activities, mental health services, neighborhood parks and public space amenities, transportation, academic and career guidance for youth, job training and crime prevention.

II.   PROJECT DESIGN and SERVICES

The design of the Gulfton Promise Neighborhood and the continuum of services proposed, are anchored in the project's theory of change, "As healthy children and families are both the product and producers of healthy communities, significant and sustained community transformation must start from *within the community itself*. Building on existing individual and neighborhood assets and resources, success comes from providing early, high-quality, comprehensive services and programs, responsive to the needs and desires of the community and proven to eliminate barriers, create opportunities and provide a high return on investment."

Another key to the success of the project is to reach a critical mass of community residents. Based on Geoffrey Canada's estimate of 65% of involved residents as the 'tipping

point' needed to enact significant, lasting neighborhood change and Gulfton's population of 53,700, the critical number for Gulfton Promise is 34,905. That being true, while in 2009 Neighborhood Centers served 6,598 residents of the neighborhood, a 100% increase since 2004, it is clear that expansion is needed and that we will not do it alone.

A.   Continuum of solutions by strategy – partners, targeted indicator(s) and evidence

STRATEGY #1: Promote optimum health and school readiness through high-quality, affordable, accessible early childhood programming for children birth-age 5 and their families.

General rationale: Research has consistently shown high quality instruction in early childhood programs improves children's academic achievement regardless of background or personal circumstance (Barnett, Brown & Shore, 2004; Gormley, Phillips & Hayer, 2008). Furthermore, many of these gains continue into elementary school and beyond. A longitudinal study by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation found that, compared to a comparison group of their peers, children who attended a high-quality preschool scored higher in literacy (24% higher passing rate on state tests) and math (16% higher), and were 35% less likely to have repeated a grade. At the completion of 8th grade, these same students were still 33% less likely to have ever repeated a grade. Results such as these have led many states to include pre-K in their education reform initiatives. The widespread inclusion of these strategies in recent Race to the Top (RTTT) proposals reflects the broad recognition that education reform must begin before kindergarten if children are to have the best chance of success.

Programs/Services (*partner*): Early Head Start, Head Start/pre-K/Child Care Collaboration *(Ripley Charter School, Benavidez Elementary)*, Bright Beginnings *(United Way)* and The Foundations Project.

Neighborhood Centers' Early Head Start (EHS) program in Gulfton has served 48

low-income expectant families, infants and toddlers annually since 1999. Recently-awarded ARRA expansion funding will increase this number to approximately 140 and expand programming from one site (Klein) to three – Klein, New Horizon Head Start Center and Lee High School (in collaboration with the YMCA). In order to provide the highest-quality and largest scope of services to all those enrolled, Neighborhood Centers' EHS and Head Start program is based on an integrated, 'birth-to-five' model. Benefits of this approach include many factors identified by research as critical to children's and families' success, including: continuity of care, coordinated service delivery and long-term parent engagement. The model also affords significant program efficiencies in terms of effective facility usage and non-duplication of content area and administrative personnel.

Targeted indicator(s): *(Refer to 'Indicator Table' under II.C – p.)* Academic – 1, 2 & 3; Family and Community – 8, 10 & 17.

Research/Evidence: A national evaluation conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, found that 3-year-old EHS children performed significantly better on a range of measures of cognitive, language, and social-emotional development than a randomly assigned control group. In addition, their parents scored significantly higher than control group parents on many aspects of the home environment and parenting behavior. Implementing the Head Start Program Performance Standards *fully* was identified as crucial to maximizing impacts on children and families. Neighborhood Centers' Early Head Start program was found in full compliance with all performance standards during our last two Federal triennial monitoring reviews.

Neighborhood Centers' Head Start program has also been a part of the community since 1999. Sites serving the Gulfton Promise Neighborhood include: New Horizon Birth-to-Five Center (enrollment 136), Klein Birth-to-Five Center (enrollment 36), Benavidez Elementary

(enrollment 80) and Robindell Private School (enrollment 36). In 2005, we became the first grantee in Houston to achieve national NAEYC accreditation.

Targeted indicator(s): Academic – 1, 2 & 3; Family and Community – 8, 10 & 17.

Research/Evidence: According to the recently published (January 2010) *Head Start Impact Study. Final Report,* "Providing access to Head Start has a positive impact on children's school experiences. There are statistically significant differences between the Head Start group and the control group on every measure of children's school experiences measured in this study." While impacts were less significant when assessed again at the end of 1st grade, Head Start graduates did show higher levels of oral language, more appropriate behaviors, positive parent-child relationships and higher levels of insurance coverage. Study methodology included a randomized control group and representative sampling of children.

Two promising models for increasing the quality of subsidized and private child care in Gulfton – both of which will be further explored during the planning year – are the United Way Bright Beginnings Project (UWBB) and Neighborhood Centers' Foundations Project.

Targeted indicator(s): Both target Academic indicators 2 & 3 and Family/Community indicator 17. In addition, Foundations supports Family/Community indicator 12.

Bright Beginnings was founded in 2002 by United Way of Greater Houston and ExxonMobil to strengthen child care centers serving some of Houston's most neglected children. The program provides a number of support systems designed to increase quality, including: teacher training, monthly in-classroom mentoring sessions, wage supplementation, leadership development for administrators, parent engagement activities and age-appropriate equipment and materials. While currently Bright Beginnings works only with nonprofit providers, United Way has made a commitment, as part of their Promise Neighborhood participation, to work on

expanding the reach of the project to for-profit providers who are committed to raising quality while staying affordable to the community.

Research/rationale: Evaluations of program impacts by researchers at the University of Houston Institute for Urban Education found that in 2007 and 2008, graduates from UWBB centers outperformed control group students at Houston ISD on Stanford Reading and Complete Battery tests and participating centers experienced a 60% increase in teacher retention, a 29% increase in teachers earning the Child Development Associate credential and between a 116% and 146% increase in program quality, as measured by the research-based, 'Infant Toddler' and 'Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales' (ITERS and ECERS).

The Foundations Project – Initially funded in November 2009 for a period of 11 months, the project provides mentoring, training, equipment grants, mental health consultation, scholarships and networking to providers serving large numbers of low-income families receiving child care subsidies. All activities are designed to support providers in implementing the research-based model for supporting children's social and emotional competence and addressing challenging behavior known as the Teaching Pyramid (Fox et al. 2003). Based on initial results, Neighborhood Centers was recently invited to apply for an expansion of this project with a second cohort of centers through June 30th, 2011. In Gulfton currently, 8 classrooms at Robindell Private School are participating in the project. Should expansion be funded, recruitment efforts will focus on other child care providers in the Gulfton Neighborhood.

Research/Evidence: Research on early brain development, child development, and clinical practice has confirmed that promoting the mental health of young children is crucial to healthy development and later school success (Knitzer 2000). Conversely, when children with early school adjustment problems are not provided effective services, they remain at high risk for

serious problems during adolescence and early adulthood, including delinquency, teen pregnancy, school failure, and substance abuse (Buka & Earls, 1993). Researchers from Yale University's Ed Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy found that preschoolers (ages 3 and 4) are expelled at a rate more than three times that of children in the K-12 grades. While Foundations Project evaluation data is not yet complete, similar interventions have been found to improve program quality and child outcomes, including reducing expulsion rates.

Strategy #2: Support and sustain effective schools to enhance and expand current efforts.

Programs/Services *(partner):* Baker-Ripley Charter Elementary School (*Ripley House Charter District*) and YES Prep Gulfton Middle and High School (*YES Public Schools*).

Serving Gulfton since 2004, the Baker-Ripley Campus of the Ripley House Charter School District is based on the 'Community Schools Model' of highly-qualified teachers, an expectation of success for all and family and community supports. Rated by the State of Texas as 'Exemplary' based on student achievement, the district offers small schools and classes, an extended academic day, after-school and mentoring programs.

Targeted indicator(s): Academic – 3 & 4; Family/Community – 8, 9, 10, 16, 17 & 18

YES Prep began serving Gulfton in 1997. In 2010, the school moved to a new free-standing location and became YES Prep Gulfton – Revolution Campus with an opening enrollment of 400 middle-school students. At full capacity, the Gulfton campus will serve 800 students in grades 6-12. The YES Prep model is unique because it takes a comprehensive view of student development, aimed at preparing students for college graduation, while at the same time instilling values of community service and good citizenship. The six core components of YES Prep's comprehensive educational approach are: small 6th-12th grade schools, rigorous college prep curriculum for every student, comprehensive student support, community service,

enrichment opportunities and personalized college counseling and support through college.

Targeted indicator(s): Academic – 4, 5, 6 & 7; Family/Community – 9, 12, 16, 17, 18

Research/Evidence: The YES Prep model is the result of practical, 'in the field' experience combined with theory and research. Results include: 100% of graduates accepted to four-year colleges nationwide; 100% of students taking the SAT with an average score of 1015 (on a scale of 1600), compared to 870 for low-income students in Houston and 993 statewide; only 5% of students requiring academic remediation upon attending college, compared with 28% of students nationwide and 50% of students in Texas. Eighty-four percent of all alumni have either graduated from college or are still enrolled in a post-secondary institution (compared to the national average of less than 20% for low income minorities).

STRATEGY #4: Increased K-12 student achievement at low-performing schools through a comprehensive program of academic, enrichment and social programs, including access to 21st century learning tools.

Programs/Services *(partner):* Apollo 20 school reform initiative (*Houston Independent School District – Lee High School*), YEZ Service Learning Project *(Lee HS/HCC collaboration)* Arts Education (*Society for the Performing Arts*) and Parenting teen program (*YMCA collaboration*).

Targeted indicator(s): Academic – 5, 6, & 7; Family and Community – 9, 11, 12, 13, 16

Utilizing the 'transformation intervention model', Lee has been named a Houston Independent School District **Apollo 20 School.** Components of this change model include: employing highly-effective teachers and principals, increased instructional time, data-driven instruction, tutoring, student incentives and a culture of high expectations for all. In addition to their proven effectiveness, these strategies align well with the structure and philosophy of the

other educational partners participating in Gulfton Promise.

Research/Evidence: – Apollo 20 is an innovative, data-driven reform model based on the work of Dr. Roland Fryer, founder of EdLabs at Harvard University. The model takes key components of successful charter schools and implements them in traditional public schools.

The **Youth Engagement Zone (YEZ) Project** is designed to improve student attendance, behavior and achievement and increase graduation and college-going rates through curriculum-related service-learning. Activities include: the creation of two service-learning after-school clubs; semi-annual, student-designed service projects; integration of the Peace Jam curriculum into 9th grade classes; the creation of a 'Community Change' service learning year-long course; and, the organization and development of a yearly Youth Summit. Program staff will recruit adult mentors for all program activities to reinforce the value of educational attainment and promote intergenerational learning.

Research/Evidence: While the YEZ Project is new, it is based on a growing body of research pointing to the effectiveness of formal school-based service learning programs in engaging and motivating youth and young adults in both the civic and education process.

Arts Education – Society for the Performing Arts (SPA) has worked with schools in the Gulfton neighborhood, including Benavidez Elementary and Lee High School, for the past 10 years and has collaborated with Neighborhood Centers for 3 years - providing art contests, artists-in-residence, student matinees, visual arts instruction in after-school programs and community dance and music performances. During the Gulfton Promise planning year, SPA will work to fully align and integrate the visual and performing arts into participating school curricula and after-school programs.

Research/Evidence: James Catterall's analysis of the National Educational Longitudinal

Survey database of 25,000 students found that students with high levels of arts participation outperform "arts-poor" students on virtually every measure – particularly students from low-income backgrounds.

Parenting teen program – The YMCA Onsite Child Center at Lee High School provides a safe and nurturing environment for teen parents and their children, ages 6 weeks – 18 months, enabling them to maintain regular school attendance and complete their academic responsibilities. The Center removes barriers to young mothers graduating from high school and provides them with the support and resources needed to practice appropriate parenting skills. The program also strives to change the culture of the school to effect a reduction in teen pregnancies and decrease in drop out rates for teen parents and to support parenting teens in pursuing higher education opportunities. The planned collaboration between YMCA and Neighborhood Centers' EHS program will expand the ages of the children served (birth – 3 years) and increase teacher/care-giver qualifications and the breadth and quality of support provided to parents.

Targeted indicator(s): Academic – 1, 2, 3 & 6; Family and Community – 10 & 16

STRATEGY #4: Provide and promote multiple pathways to college-career success, including two-year and four-year college attendance, career and technical education programs, job training and apprenticeship opportunities.

Programs/Services *(partner):* College Connections High School Program, Degree Workforce programs *(Houston Community College),* Youth Apprenticeship and Employment programs *(HCC, ARAMARK)* and Digital ASSETS Project (*One Economy*).

Targeted indicator(s): Academic – 6 & 7; Family and Community – 9, 12, 16 & 18

Houston Community College (HCC) is a state leader in providing access to post-secondary education and training for disadvantaged populations. HCC's reputation for

excellence in higher education, the accessibility of its programs, the capacity to recruit diverse adult volunteers from among its own students, and its demonstrated dedication to service learning creates real value for the community. Through HCC's College Connections program students at Lee High School receive: assistance with financial aid forms; student life information; career planning; testing; assistance with applications; college tours; orientation and advising; and, an HCC acceptance letter upon graduation.

Neighborhood Centers' Digital ASSETS (Access, Support, Sustainability, Equipment and Training for Success) Project supports the digital integration of Gulfton by helping families accumulate the assets - affordable access, equipment, training and support - necessary for increased, sustainable broadband adoption. The Digital Connector youth leadership and technology training program will provide Gulfton youth and young adults aged 14-21 with comprehensive technology training – a first step in obtaining Cisco certification and accessing expanded job opportunities. Upon completion of the program, youth will become technology trainers and ambassadors, helping to build a sustainable support network in their own underserved neighborhood.

Youth Apprenticeship and Employment Programs – During the planning year, Neighborhood Centers will work with partners HCC and ARAMARK to develop an asset-based youth apprenticeship and employment program based on identified best practices in the field – such as those found in YouthBuild and the Quantum Opportunities Program.

Research/Evidence: According to the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, helping young adults obtain and retain jobs is one of the best strategies that can be used to encourage youth to graduate from high school and make a positive transition into adulthood.

Two solutions designed to serve children and families across the continuum – from birth

to adulthood – are Community Centers and Community-Based Health Care Providers.

STRATEGY #5: Community centers as hubs for local networking and services, social and cultural events, education and family health initiatives, active civic life, leadership training, and opportunities to improve financial stability.

Our community center programming is focused around four components – Economic Development, Leadership Development and Community Engagement, Family Health and Wellness and Immigration and Citizenship. All of the programs and activities offered at the Baker Ripley Neighborhood Center are designed to promote positive outcomes for Gulfton. Two of these are featured below:

Programs/Services *(partner):* Financial Success Initiative (*HCC, Family Services, The Women's Resource and NCI Community Development Credit Union*) and Even Start.

The **Financial Success Initiative** includes the NCI Credit Union (designed to reach the unbanked population of Gulfton and serve as an alternative to payday lenders), Neighborhood Tax Centers (no-cost, year-round volunteer tax preparation designed to increase the number of families receiving the maximum amount of tax refund and credits), ESL classes, Financial Education and Financial Coaching.

Targeted indicator(s): Academic – 1 & 5; Family and Community – 14 & 15

Research/Evidence: Families who are financially stable and actively building their assets are the foundation of a healthy, thriving community and provide a secure base for children to grow and succeed. Research by the Anne E. Casey Foundation found that clients receiving 'bundled' services, like those offered through the Financial Success Initiative, are between 3 and 5 times more likely to achieve a major economic outcome (such as earning a degree or buying a car) than those receiving only one type of service.

Neighborhood Centers' Even Start program has served Gulfton for the past 9 years and has received the highest performance rating - 'Commended' - for the last 3 school years. Even Start utilizes a family-centered education model that improves the academic achievement of young children and the literacy skills of their parents in order to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and illiteracy. Like all Texas Even Start programs, our program serves families that are the most economically disadvantaged and have the lowest levels of adult literacy in the state.

Targeted indicator(s): Academic – 2 & 4; Family and Community – 9, 16 & 17

Research/Evidence: According to Texas A&M University evaluation data**,** 97% of Even Start third graders passed TAKS Reading, the state standardized reading assessment, and 99% of Even Start kindergarteners and 98% of Even Start first graders promoted to the next grade level at the end of the 2008-09 program year - promotion rates that exceeded Texas rates for kindergarten and first graders according to the State Performance Report.

STRATEGY #6: Promote optimum outcomes for children and sustain healthy, active living for all members of the community through comprehensive, affordable, accessible health care and health-related services.

Programs/Services *(partner):* Prenatal, pediatric, adolescent, family and behavioral (mental health) services – prevention and treatment *(Legacy Community Health Services – SW Clinic)* and Health Fairs *(organized by Neighborhood Centers, numerous partners).*

Legacy's Southwest Clinic provides a full array of primary care, behavioral healthcare, pharmacy, case management and other support services – including specialized adolescent health services in Gulfton. Later this year, Legacy will open an additional healthcare facility at the Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center providing pediatric care, pediatric dental services, and other preventive primary care services to students at Gulfton Promise schools and the community.

Neighborhood Centers' Health Fairs provide free health screenings, immunizations and education about preventative healthcare strategies. In 2009, over 2000 people attended at Baker-Ripley. The fairs include fun activities such as soccer tournaments, cooking and fitness demonstrations and motivational speakers.

Targeted indicator(s): Academic – 1 & 5; Family and Community – 8 & 10

Research/Evidence: Physical and emotional well-being and academic success are clearly linked. A 2002 California Health Status Assessment Project found that children who recently enrolled in health care improved their school attendance and performance by 68%. Community Health Centers play a central role in the health of vulnerable communities - providing accessible, affordable, high quality health care to 18 million patients nationally – including 1 in 7 uninsured persons, 1 in 8 Medicaid beneficiaries, and 1 in 4 low income individuals.

B. Strategies for using data

While we already have longstanding and successful collaborations with our 'Planning Council' partners and other entities serving the neighborhood, Gulfton Promise will allow us to coordinate, integrate and expand our programs to provide targeted interventions to those children and families who can most benefit. Having a system in place to share and use data in real time will facilitate continuous program improvement and help us attain our shared vision for Gulfton.

Identifying the appropriate data management tool to capture longitudinal data on Gulfton Promise students as they move through the continuum of programs, schools and services is a key task of the planning year. Recognizing that many of our partner organizations already have data management systems in place (some which are federally-mandated), we will look for a system which can interface with existing databases and glean relevant information from each source – including pre-population with existing baseline data, where available. The chosen system should

also support multiple users with unique accesses and capabilities –allowing individuals from different organizations to use the same system without being able to view (due to privacy issues) and/or change data they do not control. Two systems we have identified as potentially meeting these criteria are ETO-Impact with ETO-Community overlay and AJW.

Leading efforts to identify a suitable data management system will be a fulltime Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist. The Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist will begin by working closely with each partner organization to understand their current data management system(s). Specifically, the Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist will determine what type of information each partner regularly collects on their clients as well as where and how the information is stored. From there, specific determinations can be made regarding number of users, security requirements, etc.

Once a data management system has been selected and procured, the Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist will orient the project and select partner staff in order to pilot the system and will work closely with internal and vendor IT support personnel to audit the database and request necessary modifications. Once the system is in place, the Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist will provide initial and ongoing support to all users. Targeted dates and activities for data management system adoption, training and roll-out are included in the 'Project Timeline' in the Project Management section of this proposal (p. 36).

Once captured and accessible to all in real-time, outcomes data will play an integral role in evaluating the effectiveness of the Gulfton Promise neighborhood and be used to identify trends, areas of strength and weakness and services gaps, as well as to inform continuous program improvement activities. The Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist will hold monthly accountability meetings with the Project Director and other program staff to review data. After

implementation, these meetings will focus on outputs that help keep the project on track with implementation targets. During the planning year, however, they will focus on creating consistency in data collection processes and reporting.

Quarterly program review meetings will also be held with project partners and will be a venue to evaluate progress towards outcomes. During the planning year, these meetings will focus on analyzing baseline data so that necessary programmatic adjustments can be made before implementation. These meetings will also provide opportunities to share best practices and discuss further integration/coordination of services.

C. **Indicators used for conducting the needs assessment**

The following two tables list the 'Academic' and 'Family and Community' indicators that will be used as both program and project indicators and in the needs assessment conducted during the planning year. Preliminary sources of data are also provided. However, it is recognized that additional and/or preferred methods may be discovered after consultation with Planning Council partners and local and national evaluators. Furthermore, it is expected that much of this information – particularly that which has 'Record Review' identified as the primary source - will be accessible directly from the shared database. To assure that all surveys, assessments and strategies, such as a stratified random sampling of schools and classrooms, meet the appropriate scientific and methodological standards, we will contract with a qualified local evaluator (included in the project budget) and consult with national evaluation staff. The local evaluator will also assist in planning and conducting the required segmentation analysis and will support project staff and Planning Council members in understanding and using the results.

TABLE 1 - ACADEMIC INDICATORS	INITIAL DATA SOURCE

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1. # and % of children age 0-5 who have a place where they usually go, other than an emergency room, when they are sick or in need of advice about their health	**Record review** - # of EHS/HS children identified as having a 'medical home'; # who visit neighborhood health clinics and emergency rooms; # of visits/month by reason; # of repeat visits
2. # and % of 3-year-olds and children in kindergarten who demonstrate at the beginning of the program or school year age-appropriate functioning across multiple domains of early learning.	**Record review** – developmental assessment and standardized kindergarten measures.
3. # & % of children age 0-4 in center-based or formal home-based early learning settings or programs, e.g., Early Head Start, Head Start, child care, or publicly-funded preschool	**Record review -** subsidized child care, Head Start, EHS, child care and other Pre-K enrollment.
4. # & % of students at or above grade level according to State mathematics and English language arts assessments in at least the grades 3rd through 8th and once in high school	**Special request** - TEA or HISD analysis of number of students "at or above grade level," by campus at baseline and annually
5. Attendance rate of students in 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th grade	**Special request** - HISD campus attendance reports by grade level at baseline and annually
6. Graduation rate.	**Online** - TEA AEIS campus reports at baseline/annually; Children at Risk reports

TABLE 1 - ACADEMIC INDICATORS	INITIAL DATA SOURCE
7. # & % students who graduate with a regular high school diploma and obtain postsecondary degrees, vocational certificates etc.	**Special Request** - data from community colleges, trade schools and universities in Texas

TABLE 2 - FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT *Locally-defined indicator	INITIAL DATA SOURCE
8. # & % of children who participate in physical activity and consume fruits and vegetables daily	**Survey**
9. #/% of children participating in high-quality out-of-school activities and/or extended school day programs*	**Survey** # of neighborhood children enrolled by program, staff: child ratio, staff qualifications, accreditation status etc.
10. #/% of children/youth receiving behavioral or mental health assessments and/or services*	**Survey** – schools; **Record review** – Legacy SW Clinic and other identified providers
11. # & % of students who feel safe at school and traveling to and from school, as measured by a school climate survey	**Survey** – middle and high school students
12. # and % of suspensions or discipline referrals during the year	**Special Request** - school records **Survey** – child care centers
13. Neighborhood crime rate	**Online** - Houston Police Dept. crime data
14. Student mobility rate	**Online** - TEA AEIS/HISD campus reports

TABLE 2 - FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT *Locally-defined indicator	INITIAL DATA SOURCE
15: # and % of families who increase their financial assets and/or savings	**Survey** – families participating in any financial ed. /stability program; **Record review** – Tax Centers
16. # & % of students who say they have a caring adult in their home, school, and community	**Survey** – students K-12 and participants in after-school and youth programs
17. # & % of family members who attend parent-teacher conferences	**Record review** – Early Childhood Education and K-12 providers.
18. # & % of students who have school and home access (and % of the day) to broadband internet and a connected computing device.	**Survey** - neighborhood K-12 schools -

D.   Commitment to work with a national evaluator

Neighborhood Centers' understands the importance of a systematic, national evaluation of the Promise Neighborhood Program in order to identify, support and replicate strategies that create measureable and lasting results for children and communities and, as such, is committed to work with the national evaluator to do whatever is necessary to ensure its success.

Working with the national evaluator to develop an evaluation strategy - including identifying a credible comparison group and developing a plan for identifying and collecting reliable and valid baseline data for both program participants and a designated comparison group of nonparticipants - will be Neighborhood Centers' Director of Planning, Research and Design, Chris Pollet. Mr. Pollet has assumed this role with other Federal grants and currently serves as

the agency evaluation coordinator for the Community Innovations for Aging in Place grant from the U.S. Administration on Aging. See 'Project Personnel' (p.26) for details regarding Mr. Pollet's qualifications and experience.

While partner responsibilities regarding access to program and project data sources will be clearly delineated and agreed upon in MOUs, we understand that partners may be sometimes be challenged in responding to requests for data in a timely manner. Given the importance of maintaining good relationships between partners and local and national evaluators, the project Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist will provide support and eliminate barriers to partners in fulfilling their agreements in regard to data collection.

Neighborhood Centers also commits to taking an active interest in the evaluation methodology and frameworks developed and will provide timely and thoughtful feedback on all national plans.

III.   PROJECT PERSONNEL

A.   Staff qualifications and experience

Neighborhood Centers is structured around three divisions: **Community Based Initiatives** - neighborhood-based programs that develop skills that enhance self-sufficiency through an asset-based approach that emphasizes opportunities rather than needs. Our Asset-Based Community Development Model, used in six community centers and 20 senior centers across Harris County, is focused on long-term economic and social development that connects neighbors, develops leaders and drives growth; **Choices in Education** - providing options and opportunities for students and their parents through an integrated birth through 5th grade model of education that focuses on academic excellence, family involvement, and the consistency and connection needed at every juncture in a child's life - operating in 29 schools and centers in

Greater Houston, and; **Public Sector Solutions** developing efficient and effective delivery systems that ensure the flow of resources toward a specific public policy priority, operating programs in 42 counties across central and southeast Texas.

Reflecting the comprehensive approach of this initiative – with its emphasis on education, community, planning, evaluation and funding – Executive-level leadership of the Gulfton Promise Neighborhood will be a collaborative effort between Neighborhood Centers' Vice Presidents of Program Planning, Community-Based Initiatives and Choices in Education.

Ann Hilbig, *Vice President of Program Planning and Evaluation* - In addition to directing the design of program delivery and evaluation models for all agency programs, Ms. Hilbig oversees both government relations and government grant writing. In her 25 year tenure with the agency, Ann has held a number of positions, including an initial assignment as an intake worker in the agency's child care program. Upon joining the Executive Team in 2001, Ms. Hilbig assumed responsibility for program operations at all of the agency's community-based sites. Her accomplishments include: the creation of the Ripley House Charter School; development of innovative models of collaboration for early childhood programs; incorporation of the asset-based community development philosophy into program operations; doubling the number of senior centers; adding an evidence-based senior fitness program; and, the implementation of a compassionate case management response to disasters known as Stay Connected.

Ms. Hilbig is a 2005 graduate of Leadership Texas, was named Alumni of the Year for the University of Houston, Graduate College of Social Work in 2006, and in 2008 received the Lifetime Commitment to Children Award from the Houston Area Association for the Education of Young Children. Ms. Hilbig is a Magna Cum Laude graduate of St. Mary's Dominican

College in New Orleans, and obtained her Master of Social Work degree at the University of Houston. She is a Licensed Master Social Worker. *Resume attached.*

Claudia Vasquez, *Vice President of Community-Based Initiatives* – Mrs. Vasquez brings an array of nonprofit, education, social service and governmental experience to Neighborhood Centers. She understands social services and community organizing as it relates to immigration, youth programming, disaster recovery and sustainability and has developed and implemented programs that leverage resources through community partnerships. Prior to her current position, Mrs. Vasquez was the Director of the Citizens' Assistance Office for the Office of Mayor Bill White and served under Mayor Bob Lanier in a similar capacity in 1991. While at the City of Houston, Mrs. Vasquez had oversight of community programs for the Health and Human Services Department. She has been a teacher, case manager, job developer, director of youth programs, and a school principal for an alternative public charter high school for high-risk students. Mrs. Vasquez earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Saint Edward's University and her Doctorate in Education and mid level management certification from the University of Houston. She was recently honored as one of Houston's 'Top Women in Government'. *Resume attached.*

Pamela Sailors, *Vice President of Choices in Education and Superintendent of Schools for Ripley House Charter School District* - Before joining NCI in 2005, Ms. Sailors spent over 25 years in the public school system, including twelve years as a classroom teacher in the elementary grades. In 1997, she became principal of Piney Point Elementary School in Houston ISD where, under her leadership, the campus went from a Texas Education Agency rating of 'Unacceptable' to 'Recognized' within three years. Ms. Sailors earned her B.A. in Sociology and M.Ed. in Elementary Education from the University of Houston. She received her

Mid-Management certification at the University of St. Thomas. *Resume attached.*

Oriana Garcia, *Director of Community Development and Gulfton Promise Director* (beginning 10.01.10) – Ms. Garcia began her career at Neighborhood Centers in 1998 as Assistant to the President and CEO. In her current role as Director of Community Development, Ms. Garcia is responsible for providing leadership and support to a diverse, multi-disciplinary staff at all six agency community centers. However, since becoming New Century Gulfton Liaison in 2005, Ms. Garcia has focused much of her efforts on developing programs, plans and community support for the Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center. Part of the team who completed the very first appreciative inquiry interviews with community residents, business owners and leaders, Ms. Garcia went on to organize community workshops designed to solicit community input and ideas regarding not only the programming they wished to see for their families, but the very design of the community center itself. She created an active Advisory Board of residents, faith-based organizations, educators, nonprofits and businesses who come together frequently to share best practices and advocate for the good of the community. And it was community residents, encouraged and supported by Ms. Garcia, who testified in front of Houston City Council regarding the street closure needed to make the community center a safer place for their families. A native of Honduras, Ms. Garcia is fluent in English and Spanish and earned a Bachelor's degree in Marketing and Management from the University of Houston.

Ms. Garcia's skills, experience and passion for the Gulfton community make her a perfect leader for the Gulfton Promise Neighborhood project. In her own words, "I feel a huge sense of responsibility to this community and everyone who helped us through this [the community development] process – my relationships with members of this community are immeasurable and staying involved has been my primary goal." *Resume attached*

Chris Pollet, *Director of Planning, Research & Evaluation* – Mr. Pollet has over 18 years experience in survey research, design and administration, program evaluation, community needs assessment and in planning collaborative programming to address those needs. He has been significantly involved in community-wide efforts to address long-term elder care issues, including leading the development of the Senior Adult Services Coalition of Greater Houston, which grew into the larger Care for Elders Partnership. Mr. Pollet is a past president of the Texas Economic & Demographic Association, and is a former Adjunct Professor at the University of Houston, Graduate College of Social Work where he taught Social Work Research for five years. Mr. Pollet holds a Masters of Social Work in Planning and Administration. *Resume attached*

Selena Walsh-Wheeler, *Director of Governmental Relations* – Before joining Neighborhood Centers in 2008, Ms. Walsh-Wheeler served as the Director of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and Congressional Hispanic Caucus in Washington D.C. and the Texas Senate Hispanic Caucus in Austin. In addition to her considerable knowledge of the political process at both the state and federal level, Ms. Walsh-Wheeler has extensive experience in nonprofit management, political outreach and community organizing in low-income and minority communities. Fluent in English and Spanish, she received her B.A. Sociology and Anthropology from Bates College.

B.   Organizational capacity and experience

A 501(c)3 nonprofit agency, Neighborhood Centers Inc. has more than 100 years experience in crafting meaningful, sustainable social service programs out of often-disconnected parts. Over the years, in collaboration with other service providers and through a variety of funding mechanisms, we have built a systems approach to quickly, efficiently and professionally resolving complicated community quality-of-life problems, particularly in underserved

communities. This approach integrates and harmonizes administrative functions with service delivery and community building functions to expedite an appropriate response to critical needs. Local advisory boards, site councils and parent committees provide input and feedback to ensure our programs are timely and responsive to each community in which we operate.

As detailed in the attached, 'Preliminary Memorandum of Understanding', Neighborhood Centers has **strong existing relationships** with our project partners, and each has a strong commitment to Gulfton. Together, the thirteen Planning Council member agencies/organizations have a combined total of 227 years of service to the neighborhood. Four organizations, including Neighborhood Centers, have been working in Gulfton for 25 years or more.

Neighborhood Centers first began its involvement in the Gulfton community during the early 1980s with the opening of a child care center for low to moderate income families. During the 1990s, we led a collaborative community youth development project, forming relationships and building strategic partnerships with other community service providers. In 1998, we opened a family literacy project—The BRIDGE/El PUENTE—in one of the largest Gulfton apartment complexes. In 1999, we took over an ailing Head Start program targeting 2,000 low income children and their families in the southwest quadrant of Harris County.

Throughout all this time, Gulfton residents and other stakeholders were asking for a community center. The City of Houston discussed locating a city multi-service center there, and we received many requests for a 'Neighborhood Center' to serve the area. Demographic profiles showed the area to have large numbers of undocumented immigrants, low literacy levels, and a high incidence of poverty along with juvenile crime and gang activity—virtually all the indicators of a community in trouble. Under the traditional 'needs-based' service model, the neighborhood was broken, plagued by intractable problems demanding increased services.

Yet our two decades of work in Gulfton told us this area held great potential. We saw neighbors with extraordinary strengths and talents, a community with countless untapped assets. What we needed was a new working strategy that would tap that potential—an approach grounded in asset-based community development.

In 2005, neighborhood resolve, available property, and likely donors for a community center began to align. But before making a significant capital investment, we needed to be certain that we had true buy-in from the community.

We addressed the issue by creating a map of Gulfton community assets using the method of Appreciative Inquiry. We interviewed 125 neighborhood residents, school personnel, service providers, faith based leaders, businesses, and elected officials - asking questions designed to draw out strengths and aspirations, and what was right and positive about the community. Larger group forums then helped develop a community vision.

The picture of Gulfton that emerged was very different from the one depicted by sociologists, demographers, public health administrators, and government planners. We discovered a richly diverse community of hardworking immigrants with strong family values, and parents who dreamed their children would have a far better life than their own. When we shared this picture with the residents through meetings and a written report, they saw more clearly the value of their neighbors and the rich relationships that exist between the people, the institutions, and the organizations in their neighborhood.

Five years later, the residents of Gulfton saw their efforts come to fruition with the opening of a new four-acre village center—the Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center. Community stakeholders played an integral role in the center's design as well as its program offerings. They also ensured that Baker-Ripley would operate collaboratively with local strategic partners—

businesses, faith-based congregations, schools, and health care and social service providers. It was, and is, the beginning of a success story of what once was considered a troubled community without hope. Becoming a Promise Neighborhood will not only ensure Gulfton residents sustain the significant community gains they've made, but will focus efforts on ensuring all children receive the education they need to be successful. With its emphasis on common outcomes and using data to evaluate and drive service delivery, it is also an opportunity to scale-up and/or replicate the model elsewhere.

In regard to collecting, **analyzing and using data for decision-making and ongoing improvement**, Neighborhood Centers has experience in using both externally-mandated and internally-created data management systems. Several years ago, our Early Head Start/Head Start program adopted a web-based system - PROMIS – which allowed for real-time data entry by front-line workers (versus forms being completed by hand and then inputted) and customized reports for management. These reports, which used the annual report required by the Office of Head Start as their template, were reviewed in Monthly Accountability meetings led by the Head Start Director. Based on the data, staff were recognized for meeting or surpassing targets and solutions to under-performance were problem-solved and responsibility and deadlines assigned.

In 2008 this 'Accountability model', incorporating lessons learned - and focused more on outcomes, rather than outputs - was successfully replicated in our Community Based Initiatives division, utilizing an agency-developed data management system known as Community Tracking System (CTS).

In addition to the systems described above, through our work in helping individuals and communities recover from four major hurricane disasters, we have gained experience with several different case management software systems – each with its own strengths and

challenges. These databases - Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) designed by Social Solutions, the Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN) and Tracking-At-A-Glance (TAAG) - have been used nationally to track case management activities and share data .

Neighborhood Centers has extensive experience in **securing and leveraging funding from multiple public and private sources** and have been **managing large, complex projects in partnership with federal and local agencies** for over 40 years. Currently, we have grants/contracts from 5 federal agencies – the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Education, Labor, Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development; 3 state agencies – the Texas Departments of State Health Services and Aging and Disability Services and the Texas Education Agency; and numerous City of Houston, Harris County and other local government units. These grants, worth approximately $186 million, represent over 50 different funding streams, each with its own unique requirements and restrictions. Our private funding sources include monies from United Way and over 500 private foundations, corporations and individuals totaling more than $13 million, many requiring individual management.

One example of our ability to braid together funding streams – in this case Federal and State dollars - to expand and enhance service delivery is the innovative 'stacked model' developed by Neighborhood Centers' Head Start leadership in 2006. The stacked model derives its name from the 'stacking' of a 3 hour public pre-k half-day program and a 5-6 hour Head Start day to create an integrated program that recognizes and builds on the unique strengths and resources of each. Rooted in a growing body of research showing that longer hours spent in a *quality* program create more positive outcomes for 'at-risk' students, the model provides a minimum of eight hours of services to dually enrolled Head Start/Pre-K children each program year at no additional cost to Head Start or their families.

Another example of integrated programming is our long-standing Head Start/public pre-K partnerships. From an agency perspective, these collaborations are incredibly valuable as they allow both partners to serve the highest number of eligible children possible, in the most beneficial, comprehensive and cost-effective way. Our first Head Start/school district collaboration began in 1999 with Gulfton Promise Partner, Benavidez Elementary. The public schools enthusiastically welcome the additional services offered to their eligible families and the additional Head Start-funded teacher in the classroom creates a more appropriate teacher/child ratio for a group of 18 to 20 four-year-olds. Head Start also assists the schools with parent involvement and education efforts. Training opportunities are provided jointly for both school and Head Start parents and staff, creating yet another way of maximizing resources.

Lessons learned though initiating, maintaining and, when necessary, dissolving these partnerships include: the importance of a shared philosophy; taking time to create trust and relationships; open, honest conversation about expectations and requirements *before* the partnership begins; ongoing discussion about day-to-day operations and future plans at regular intervals while the partnership is place, and; having an 'exit strategy' that partners understand and support.

With a mission "*to bring resources, education and connection to underserved neighborhoods*", Neighborhood Centers Inc. has employed **a place-based, community-centered approach** since its founding in 1907. We have been recognized by many for both our large geographic and programmatic scope of services, as well as our ability to connect to and create meaningful, personal relationships with our neighbors – an individualized approach that communicates that every person, and every community served, is equally important. In this regard, Neighborhood Centers is very much a small, community-based provider – but with the

capacity, resources and influence of one of the oldest and largest nonprofits in the nation.

IV. MANAGEMENT PLAN

A. Governance structure and accountability

As described previously under, 'Project Personnel', Executive-level leadership for the project will be shared by Neighborhood Centers' Vice Presidents of Planning, Community-Based Initiatives and Choices in Education, with the VP of Planning providing primary oversight, support and supervision during the planning phase.

Reporting to the Vice President of Planning is the Gulfton Promise Program Director, Oriana Garcia *(see 'Project Personnel' p.25 and attached resume for qualifications/experience).* Primary responsibilities of this full-time senior leadership position are: provide leadership to the project, including the Planning Council, ensuring compliance with all grant requirements; work collaboratively with partners to complete required of planning year activities in a timely manner; manage program budget and identify/assist in securing additional funding and in-kind support; represent the project at agency, partner and community meetings, and; work with Director of Governmental Relations to communicate with elected officials regarding project successes and barriers.

Reporting to the Director are three full-time positions: Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist, Outreach Specialist and Program Assistant. All three of these positions, and the Program Director, will be funded directly by the Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant. Responsibilities and qualification requirements of these currently open positions are as follows:

- Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist – Facilitate the adoption of a shared data management system. Complete assessment of existing partner data systems. Provide initial and ongoing training and support. Work with external vendor, internal IT departments and

other staff as needed to problem-solve and address barriers to data collection. Create monitoring schedule to ensure complete and accurate data. Work closely with Director of Planning, Research and Evaluation and local and national evaluators. Bachelors degree required, experience with databases and/or data management preferred. Excellent computer, logic and analytical skills required.

- Outreach Specialist – Facilitate coordination of Gulfton Promise and 'Apollo 20' school reform activities at Lee HS. Identify and provide access to programs and services that meet the goals and mission of project. Meet regularly with school leadership, students and parents to champion the project and get feedback. Coordinate data collection and assist in access to required school information for local and national evaluation efforts. Provide staff leadership and support to the 'Communications/Outreach' committee of the Council. Bachelors degree and experience working with youth, preferably in a school setting required. Bilingual English/Spanish required.

- Program Assistant – Provide administrative support to project staff and Partner Council, including data entry as needed. HS diploma. Bilingual English/Spanish required.

Completing the Gulfton Promise 'core team' are the Directors of Government Relations and Planning, Research and Evaluation (supported by agency M&G funding at .25 and .15 FTE respectively) and a Local Evaluator. The Director of Government Relations will serve as the primary liaison to local, State and Federal government leaders to secure commitments to develop and/or expand an infrastructure of policies, practices, systems and resources that supports the Gulfton Promise Neighborhood and our efforts to sustain and 'scale-up' the initiative. As described earlier, the Director of Planning, Research and Evaluation will support the efforts of the Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist and assist in identifying a qualified Local Evaluator and

working with both local and national evaluation efforts.

While contracted during the first year and supported by Promise Neighborhood funds, the Local Evaluator may become a full-time staff position during the implementation phase – based on project need and Planning Council input. Qualifications for this individual are: doctoral–level credentials in evaluation, research methodologies or a related field and experience in working with diverse populations, including school districts and community organizations or initiatives.

Further support for the project will be provided by the Gulfton Community Developer (.5 FTE) and, on an as-needed basis, by staff and leadership of agency IT (database management and support), Development (individual, foundation, and corporate funding), Budget (integrating funding streams), Marketing and Communications (outreach and marketing campaign and materials and Business Compliance and Design (program monitoring and contract compliance) departments.

In implementing the Gulfton Promise project, Neighborhood Centers will follow existing agency processes, which we have found to be very effective in ensuring accountability and timely progress towards goals. All Gulfton Promise Project staff will write and submit weekly reports to the Program Director listing tasks, accomplishments, and challenges. On a monthly basis, the Program Director will submit an 'Accountability Summary' to a Core Group of Agency Directors tasked with identifying potential challenges and opportunities, addressing those regarding day-to-day operations and communicating actions taken and outstanding concerns to the Executive Team. A variation of this report will be provided to the Partners Council, also on a monthly basis, and made available for community review. As detailed previously in, 'Project Design and Services' the Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist will hold monthly accountability meetings with the Program Director and other program staff to review

data and progress towards achieving outcomes and service targets. Quarterly, these meetings will be expanded to include all Planning Council representatives. At these, and all formal planning meetings including partners, minutes will be recorded and distributed.

B.   Project timeline for planning process

Pre-award July – September 2010

- Convene Planning Council to discuss strategies and timelines included in the proposal – identify what could move forward without a planning grant and which require funding

* Planning Council, and committees as described in the preliminary MOU, will continue to meet monthly – or more often as needed - throughout the planning year

1ˢᵗ Quarter (October – December 2010)

- Hire project staff and contract with local evaluator

- Finalize additional locally-designed indicators to be used and complete needs assessment and segmentation analysis

- Research partner organization existing data/data management systems, work with partners to identify required elements of a shared system and publish a 'Request for Bid'

- Create calendar of community events for planning year

- Hold first community event/project 'kick-off'

2ⁿᵈ Quarter (January – March 2011)

- Choose and purchase shared data management system and determine specific responsibilities of each partner in terms of data collection and information sharing

- Work with Planning Council to develop a strategy to hold partners responsible for meeting performance goals and milestones

- Create MOU with specifics re: data sharing and accountability and secure partner

      commitments

- Modify initial continuum of solutions to address challenges and gaps identified through needs assessment/segmentation analysis

- Hold second community event/celebration

3rd Quarter (April – June 2011)

- Outcomes/Evaluation Specialist and selected partner staff trained on chosen data management software. Baseline/existing data uploaded into system

- Identify additional partners for implementation year

- Work with Partner Council to develop and write 'Promise Neighborhoods Implementation Grant' proposal

4th Quarter (July – September 2011)

- Initial training of staff and leadership of partner organizations in preparation for full implementation

- Hold 'listening session' with community stakeholders regarding systems/policy barriers to a seamless continuum of service delivery

- Develop and publish comprehensive 'Report to the Community' on the process, outcomes and future plans for the project

C.   **Strategies for community outreach and diverse participation**

Before the formal Promise Neighborhoods RFP was even released, Neighborhood Centers staff met with residents, leaders and service providers at the Gulfton Advisory Board and Service Partner meetings to gauge community interest and solicit feedback regarding the needs, opportunities and solutions they felt were important. This dialogue continued as the Partner Council was formed and is reflected in the diversity of partners and participants on the Council –

including high school and community college student representatives.

Outreach and engagement strategies during the planning and implementation phases include: hiring an 'Outreach Specialist', housed on campus at Lee High School; convening an 'Outreach and Communications' committee of the Council, open to the community-at-large; engaging existing policy and advisory groups such as the Head Start Policy Council, Parent-Teacher Organizations and student associations; publishing regular newsletters and other communications (including a website, created as part of the Digital Connectors Youth Program described earlier), and; holding community events/celebrations. In addition, the annual ARAMARK volunteer day event will be used as an opportunity to gain broader community and media attention to the project. All outreach and communication materials will be produced in both English and Spanish.

D.   Strategies for sustainability and "scale-up"

Neighborhood Centers has proven to be a sustainable organization, growing every year for the past 25 years. Central to this sustainability, and our ability to sustain and grow our programs, are the following three factors:

1. We have a high degree of accountability and effectiveness – recognized for "excellence in large nonprofit management" by the Houston Better Business Bureau. Our total operating budget is more than $200 million, yet our management and general overhead, including fundraising costs, represent less than 5% percent of our annual budget.

2. We are governed by a local Board of Directors that has years of experience in effectively leading large and complex organizations - the same individuals who are shaping the future of the Gulf Coast region are governing Neighborhood Centers. This influential and connected group of individuals plays a crucial role in securing agency resources

(particularly private funding support) and championing the agency's work to city and county officials as well as to business and community leaders.

3. We have a demonstrated capacity to quickly hire, equip, train and deploy hundreds of specialized staff, to effectively lead large collaborative efforts involving dozens of private and public organizations, and to collect, compile, analyze and report detailed management and production reports to the different funders.

Another factor specific to the sustainability of the Gulfton Promise Neighborhood is the significant investment the agency has already made in bringing educational, economic and other opportunities to the community. In addition to a project-to-date investment of close to $14 million in building the Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center, Neighborhood Centers total 2010 operating budget for Gulfton is approximately $2.7 million, a $200,000 increase over the previous year. Funding comes from a wide variety of sources including direct federal dollars (Head Start), State and Federal education funds (Charter School, Title I), United Way, corporations (ARAMARK/ExxonMobil), community members (membership dues) and agency fundraising efforts (Gulfton New Century Campaign).

Important to the success of both sustainability and scale-up efforts is our ability to strategically pursue funding that compliments and supports both existing and potential future programming. As this pertains to Gulfton Promise and the proposed continuum of strategies, we have applied for, or plan to apply for, the following federal and state grants:

- **Youth Engagement Zone** – Three year federal grant (@ $335,000/year) from the Corporation for National and Community Service to support service learning projects for youth at Lee High School and Houston Community College. *Strategy supported: Increased student achievement through a comprehensive program of academic,*

enrichment and social programs, including access to 21st century learning tools' and the *Invitational Priority of Civic Engagement.* (Applied)

- **Broadband Technology Opportunities Program –**Two year federal grant ($2.99m) from the U.S. Department of Commerce to support and sustain broadband access and usage among underserved communities – including Gulfton. *Strategy supported: 'Provide and promote multiple pathways to college-career success' and the Invitational Priority of Quality Internet Connectivity.* (Applied –in due diligence phase)

- **Self-Sufficiency Grant –** A joint proposal with Planning Council partner, ARAMARK, this Texas Workforce Commission Grant will support workforce development and job placement activities. *Strategy supported: 'Provide and promote multiple pathways to career success'.* (Applying)

- **Early Learning Mentor Coaches** – Available only to current Head Start grantees, this grant from DHHS supports mentors for Early Head Start and Head Start teachers. *Strategy supported: 'High-quality early childhood programming'.* (Applying)

- **Full-Service Community Schools** – Multi-year grant from the US Department of Education to fund community schools – "connecting students, students' family members, and community members with available services and opportunities, creating the conditions for students to achieve in school and beyond." *Strategy supported: 'Support and sustain effective schools to enhance and expand current efforts'.* (Applying)

- **Choice Neighborhoods** - HUD program to fund the transformation of neighborhoods of poverty into viable mixed-income neighborhoods with access to economic opportunities. *Strategy supported: all.* (Plan to apply upon RFP release)

Along with sustainability, it is important that a successful Promise Neighborhood have

the ability to expand or 'scale up'. As such, one of first tasks of the Planning Council will be to develop a standard, consistent methodology for calculating cost per participant for each of the programs and activities of Gulfton Promise. While this can be challenging – particularly when dealing with multiple funding streams and partners – in our experience with our Head Start program, it is possible to identifying and isolate different sources of revenue and expense within one program and calculate, for example, the costs and efficiencies for a collaborative school-based versus free-standing Head Start center.

Cost-benefit (and/or 'return on investment') analyses will enable the Planning Council and Neighborhood Centers' leadership to make informed decisions regarding which programs to expand or replicate. It will also provide a basis for budgeting and setting fund raising targets (both for sustainability and scale-up). Other components of Neighborhood Centers scale-up plans are: engaging the community in the design, identifying and building on existing community strengths and resources and making informed decisions based on results and research on what works (from places such as the Harvard Family Research Project, The Bridgespan Group and the Harlem Children's Zone).

In terms of potential geographic areas, the most obvious choice would be Sharpstown. An area contiguous to the proposed Gulfton Promise area (often called Gulfton/Sharpstown), many Planning Council members also provide services to this area – including Neighborhood Centers' EHS/Head Start and Charter programs, there is an active civic/neighborhood improvement association to partner with and Sharpstown High School is also a persistently low-performing High School and shares feeder schools with Lee. However – due to Neighborhood Centers' strong presence in other Houston 'Neighborhoods of Promise' there may also be opportunities to scale-up in other communities, such as Sunnyside, where we have an Early Childhood

Development Center, Community Center, Healthy Start program, Early Head Start and a Head Start collaboration or, Alief, where we have two large Head Start centers, and relationships with the school district and area providers.

V.   SIGNIFICANCE

A.   Long-term systems change and increased local capacity

As evidenced by current and planned grant applications listed under Section IV - 'Management Plan', Neighborhood Centers has the capacity to identify, track and respond to a variety of new funding sources that can be used to sustain and expand the improvements made by the Gulfton Promise Project. Furthermore, the programs at the heart of the project – EHS/Head Start, public and charter schools and community colleges – have relatively stable, ongoing funding streams. We also have the support of local, state and national elected officials and local and national organizations who believe in Gulfton and Neighborhood Centers (see Appendix F: Letters of Support). Perhaps more important, however, to effecting long-term systems change or improvement is the project's emphasis on building existing neighborhood strengths, resources and organizations and mobilizing residents to advocate for the services and opportunities they want for their families. The inclusion of strategies to increase individual and family financial savings and assets is also a key factor in building local capacity to sustain the improvements made.

B.   Innovation and replication

Building on a foundation of proven, existing strategies, Gulfton Promise involves the development and/or demonstration of several promising new strategies (all previously described) including: The Bright Beginnings and Foundations child care quality improvement projects, onsite Early Head Start programming for teens, the 'Apollo 20' school reform program, the

Digital ASSETS inclusion project and youth 'career pathways'.

While there is clearly much to work on to transform Gulfton into a true Promise Neighborhood – including seamless coordination and long-term outcomes tracking - many of the service components are already in place, giving the project the potential to be fully implemented and at 'scale-up' phase relatively quickly,.

Also, as previously described, Neighborhood Centers has a unique depth and breadth of programs and relationships in underserved neighborhoods throughout the Greater Houston area. Building on the systems implemented and lessons learned in Gulfton, and individualized to the needs and wants of the community, we believe there is real potential to see a Sunnyside Promise, Independence Heights Promise, Pasadena Promise and others, in the next five to ten years.

Finally, as noted Rice University demographer Stephen Kleinberg has stated, "Houston is at the forefront of the new diversity that is refashioning the social and political landscape of urban America as the social and demographic trends occurring here spread to other U.S. cities. Houston is a reflection of where most of America's cities will be in the next 20 years." That being true, a successful Gulfton is, in many ways, the model for a successful future America.

VI.   INVITATIONAL PRIORITIES

A.   **Unique Learning Needs –** Gulfton Promise addresses the needs of English-Language Learners through bilingual, dual-language and English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) from birth (EHS) to adulthood (HCC/ESL classes).

B.   **Quality Internet Connectivity –** The Digital ASSETS Project will bring quality internet connectivity to over 5500 individuals in Gulfton (p.14).

C.   **Civic Engagement –** The Youth Engagement Zone Project is designed to increase civic engagement among youth and young adults through service learning projects (p.14).

D. **Arts and Humanities –** Arts education and performances are included in our strategies

to support and improve educational outcomes (p. 12).