

February 21, 2018 Update

Elwyn C. Lee

Vice President for Neighborhood and Strategic Initiatives

SECTION I: THIRD WARD INITIATIVE – EDUCATION

Leaders:

Robert McPherson, Dean, College of Education

Jonathan Schwartz, Associate Dean, College of Education

Anne McClellan, Director of Innovation, College of Education

1. HISD Crisis

Two of the six targeted HISD schools might be closed through the application of House Bill 1842 passed last legislative session that requires dramatic changes up to and including closure when schools have been in Improvement Required (IR) status for several years. The latest report is that of the six schools targeted by UH only Blackshear elementary school is threatened with imminent closure. Unless TEA waives a deadline, HISD must act by the end of April 2018. TEA and HISD representatives are holding community meetings to discuss the issues at threatened schools. The meeting at Blackshear Elementary school is scheduled for February 27, 2018.

A group of angry parents and HISD alumni have engaged in demonstrations at several meetings loudly protesting the possible closure of the threatened schools, and denouncing TEA.

HISD has informed the College of Education that it will continue to have a role to play in helping children learn at Blackshear elementary regardless of what entity ends up running the school going forward.

2. BOV Task Force on Third Ward Schools

a. The TASK FORCE has not met in weeks in part due to the crisis at HISD that has consumed the attention of the HISD administrations and principals with whom Chair, Wayne Lockett had hoped to meet. Wayne Lockett, COE representatives and Dr. Lee have all attended community meetings concerning Third Ward schools.

3. Community Meeting On Third Ward Education - As part of the Complete Communities, the Mayor's Office of Education headed by his Director of Education, Juliet Stipeche, hosted a Third Ward Community Meeting on Education on January 25, 2018. Professor Ann McClellan and College of Education representatives worked with the city on the format of the meeting.

4. Yates Senior High School

- a. Enrollment is up to 820 compared to a fall semester enrollment of 760. In the 1960's the enrollment was closer to 3,000. Alumni and Yates supporters fear that a very low enrollment will lead to the repurposing of Yates even though a new building is being constructed.
- b. Principal Kenneth Davis is co-teaching a course in the UH College of Educations with Professor Anne McClellan.

5. STEM Mars Rover Program – Though the program is not new, what was new this year was Prof. Dan Price's idea to partner with residents and children in the Cuney Homes public housing project where many of the Blackshear Elementary school children live. His resident community health workers learned how to lead the students in STEM projects and the children were exposed to science concepts and STEM careers. Professor Price is with the Honors College; the other key UH participants were from the Stem Teaching Equity Project housed in the UH College of Education.

SECTION II: TWI: ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Leaders:

Saleha Khumawala, Professor of Accounting, Director of the SURE (Stimulating Urban Renewal through Entrepreneurship) Program, BAUER College of Business

Jerry Evans, Professor College of Technology

Christopher Heard, Clinical Professor, UH College of Law

Leonard Baynes, Dean UH College of Law

2. SURE Program

a. Spring Semester -- The spring semester has begun. Over 600 individuals attempted to apply, 215 were interviewed and 115 accepted. Of that number 108 are still attending classes. A total of 16 participants are from Third Ward or recommend by Third Ward organizations. Close to 40 participants have been referred by Third Ward SURE Alumni. Thirty five MBA students are acting as mentors to the participants.

b. Grameen America Inc. (GAI) – Andrea Jung, President and CEO of Grameen America. Inc. , a micro-lending institution that grants small loans to eligible female aspiring entrepreneurs, will be visiting Houston on February 28th . Following discussion on the feasibility of GAI partnering with the SURE program, GAI representatives will tour Third Ward.

3. Employment Initiatives

a. Young Mother's Employment Pilot Program (YMEPP)--Because the first year of the program was not as successful, the collaborators are taking a hard look at how to revise the employment initiatives. The idea that has garnered great support is the proposed establishment of a Financial Opportunity Center (FOC).

b. Financial Opportunity Center (FOC) proposal-During the fall of 2017 Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) conducted a Feasibility Study to determine what organization possessed the

necessary strengths and experience to become the next FOC in the LISC network of FOCs. LISC reviewed over a dozen organizations active in Third Ward and finally recommended Project Row Houses (PRH) as the entity that could anchor a family wealth building program using the FOC model. Once established the FOC would provide residents with a coordinated set of services to help low-income individuals and families obtain jobs, strengthen their finances and achieve stability. The key outcomes will be job placements, long-term job retention, increased net worth and higher credit scores. UH could be one of the partners in this endeavor should the PRH board vote to accept the six figure grant from a local philanthropy and the LISC guidance on establishing the necessary FOC infrastructure.

4. Anchor Strategies – The Democracy Collaborative (TDC)

a. DRAFT MOU-TDC drafted an MOU that has been approved in principle by TSU and Memorial Hermann. It is still under review at HoustonFirst and UH. The document commits the parties to allowing their respective staffs to explore the anchor strategy possibilities through occasional teleconferences with their anchor institutions colleagues as part of what TDC is calling the Houston Anchor Collaborative (HAC). The document is open to the addition of other institutions joining in the future and emphasizes that membership is voluntary in nature:

“This MOU is a voluntary agreement and does not create any legally enforceable obligations. It signifies a good faith commitment by our leadership to support the aims of the Houston Anchor Collaborative. Any institution may terminate this commitment at any time and for any reason by providing written notice of the termination to the HAC Leadership Circle. “

b. Coalition of Urban Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) and The Democracy Collaborative (TDC) ---- Exploring anchor strategies is clearly a growing national trend as evidenced by the CUMU’s initiative to expand the exploration of these strategies through a partnership with TDC. UH is a member of CUMU and as such has been invited to participate in CUMU’s **Higher Education Anchor Mission Initiative** that will provide access to facilitated peer learning exchanges, tools and strategies.

SECTION III: TWI - HEALTH

Leaders:

Ezemenari Obasi, Associate Dean for Research; Chair, Department of Health and Learning Sciences, College of Education

Luis Torres, Associate Dean for Outreach, Graduate College of Social Work

Dan O’Connor, Chair, Department of Health & Human Performance

Stephen Spann, Planning Dean for the UH Medical School

1. Treating Obesity in Underserved Communities in Houston (TOUCH)

Several UH administrators met to discuss how best to publicize TOUCH’s diabetes preventative and treatment services as well as the United Health Foundation’s generous \$2 million grant.

2. Third Ward Collaborative Health Fair -- On Saturday, February 17, 2018 students and staff from various UH health related department and colleges participated in this health fair held at the

Trinity United Methodist Church. The primary organizers were the UH Social Work graduate student interns with the Third Ward Community Cloth who collaborated with health, community organizations and area Methodist ministers. Other UH participants included the Department of Health and Human Performance, the College of Optometry, the College of Education and TOUCH.

SECTION IV: ART and CULTURE

Leaders:

Andrew Davis, Interim Dean, Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts (KGMCA)

Rick Lowe, Founder Project Row Houses and Adjunct Associate Professor, KGMCA

Ryan Denning, Dir. of Public Art, Project Row Houses

Sixto Wagan, Dir. of the Center for Arts and Social Engagement (CASE), KGMCA

1. UH CASE-PRH Fellows

a. Two New Fellows – Dean Davis reports that the quality and number of applicants for the two UH CASE/PRH fellowship positions were “truly remarkable.” Of the 63 applicants reviewed by the committee nearly half were local artists, 4 international artists and 27 from across the country. The two new fellows selected are: Regina Agu an artist based in Houston, and Eyakem Gulilat, originally from Ethiopia. They made their welcoming presentations last night, February 20th at Project Row Houses to a crowd of about 60. This year’s fellows have identified research and creative projects that explore aspects of Third Ward church history, culture and place-making practices.

2. Community Outreach

a. The Band marched and played in both of the two MLK parades that took place on January 15, 2018. The UH float participated in what is called the Stamps parade. The float alternates between the two parades.

b. String Project – The school of music is finalizing an initiative that will launch in fall 2018 that will engage strings and orchestra students in Third and Fifth Ward schools, in private and group music instruction by university students, under faculty supervision.

SECTION V: RELATED INFORMATION

1. Wolff Foundation – Vice Chancellor Brice and Vice President Elwyn Lee met with the foundation’s board to describe UH’s involvement in Third Ward. The board members are scheduled to tour Third Ward on March 5th.

1. PRH 25th Anniversary Gala scheduled for October 26th --- This event will mark the culmination of a year long celebration of PRH’s 25 years of achievement.

2. North Third Ward Planning Project (NTWPP)

This consortium of Third Ward institutions received word that its implementation grant application was approved. Wells Fargo Foundation has asked NTWPP to keep the amount confidential until it can organize an official announcement later in the year. Changes Happens was the fiscal agent for the planning grant, and Ms. Helen Stagg, Senior Staff at Change Happens, coordinated the overall planning process and directed several Change Happens staff who all worked diligently throughout the process. Among the plan's objectives are activities concerning the Third Ward Initiative focus areas of education, health, and economic development.

3. Mayor's Third Ward Complete Communities

The final recommendations were presented to the Third Ward community on February 7th at the Third Ward Multi-Service center. After some tweaking the draft THIRD WARD ACTION PLAN will be presented to the Houston City Council for approval. The draft Action Plan represents a consolidation of several plans that have been prepared over the last 3-4 years. The Third Ward Neighborhood Support Team, comprised primarily of Third Ward residents, helped to refine the priorities of the action plan.