

PRELIMINARY MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING between

Gulfton Promise Neighborhood Partners and

Neighborhood Centers Inc.

I. PURPOSE: The purpose of the Gulfton Promise Neighborhood ('GPN') is to build and maintain a comprehensive continuum of solutions from birth through adulthood designed to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children living in the Gulfton neighborhood and to transform the community from 'distress to success'.

II. GENERAL COMMITMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS: The undersigned entities agree to engage with each other and the community in a mutually-respectful, supportive and accountable collaboration, as described in this document under 'Section IV. Governance Structure', to successfully complete the following activities during the GPN Project planning year (10.01.10 – 09.30.11): a strengths/needs assessment and segmentation analysis; plans to provide and sustain a continuum of quality, effective services that, wherever possible, build on the work of other place-based initiatives, and; a comprehensive, longitudinal data management system shared and accessible to all partners.

In addition, partners agree to support one or more staff members' commitment of 5-10% of their time to serve on the Planning Council, to continue to deliver the high-quality services and programs (as described in Section III of this MOU) and to work diligently towards the realization of a safe, stable Gulfton where all children feel supported, enter Kindergarten ready to learn, become proficient in core academic subjects, have access to 21st century learning tools, transition successfully from middle to high school, graduate from high school and obtain post-secondary education.

Guiding the work of the GPN Planning Council is the following **Theory of Change**, shared by each undersigned partner: 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, culturally-appropriate services and programs, responsive to the needs and desires of the community and proven to eliminate barriers, create opportunity and provide a high return on investment.

III. PARTNER DESCRIPTIONS AND COMMITMENT DETAILS:

Ripley House Charter School is a State of Texas open-enrollment elementary charter school founded by Neighborhood Centers Inc. in 2002 to *‘provide choices and opportunities in early education that lead to more and better opportunities in higher education’*. Based on the ‘Community Schools Model’ of highly-qualified teachers, an expectation of success for all and family and community supports, the State-rated ‘Exemplary’ district has served at-risk Pre-K children in collaboration with Neighborhood Centers’ Head Start program in Gulfton since 2004. In 2007, the Baker-Ripley Campus opened and is projected to serve 264 students K-5 by 2013. The Ripley House Charter School addresses the early childhood and elementary portion of the continuum and activities support Promise Neighborhoods outcomes of children entering kindergarten ready to learn, student proficiency in core subjects, student health, safety and family/community support and access to 21st century learning tools. In addition to changing the name of the Baker-Ripley campus to the ‘Gulfton Promise Campus’ to increase community awareness of the project, Ripley House commits in-kind resources of \$4,680 (staff salary and benefits).

Roy P. Benavidez Elementary is a Houston Independent School District campus, *'dedicated to providing a positive, safe, and effective environment for all students. Our strong curriculum will develop self pride, responsibility, and creative thinking to meet the challenges of a competitive, technological, and multicultural society'*. In Gulfton since 1992, Benavidez serves a primarily low-income and Limited English Proficient population of 953 Pre-K – 5th students annually. The school places a particular emphasis on parent involvement and engagement – a philosophy reflected in their long-standing partnership with Neighborhood Centers' Head Start program. Since 1999, approximately 80 Pre-K students and their families have benefited from the collaboration. Like Ripley House Charter School, Benavidez serves early childhood and elementary portions of the curriculum and supports the achievement of Promise Neighborhoods outcomes in regards to children entering kindergarten ready to learn, student proficiency in core subjects, student health, safety and family/community support and access to 21st century learning tools. Benavidez commits in-kind resources of \$4,680 (staff salary and benefits).

YES Prep Public Schools mission is to, *'Do "Whatever It Takes" to increase the number of low-income Houstonians who graduate from four-year colleges prepared to compete in the global marketplace and give back to their communities.'* Small schools (currently 8 school campuses) serving grades 6-12, rigorous academics, community service, student support, college counseling and enrichment opportunities have proven to be a highly-effective model with 100% of YES Prep graduates attending 4 year colleges nationwide. YES Prep schools are in the middle and high school portion of the continuum and support results of student academic proficiency, successful transition from middle to high school, high school graduation, college success, student safety, family and community support and access to 21st century learning tools. In 1997, YES Prep began serving Gulfton area 6th graders in a dedicated wing of Lee High School. 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. YES commits in-kind resources of \$7,500 (staff salary and benefits) to the Gulfton Promise Project.

Robert E. Lee High School has been part of the Gulfton neighborhood for almost 50 years. Serving an ethnically and linguistically-diverse, predominately low-income population of 1,928 students grades 9-12, Lee is currently one of the four lowest performing high schools in Houston and is considered a ‘persistently lowest-achieving school’. Utilizing the ‘transformation intervention model’, Lee has been named an Apollo 20 school – a reform model based on the work of Dr. Roland Fryer, founder of EdLabs at Harvard University. Components of this change model include: employing highly-effective teachers and principals, increased instructional time, data-driven instruction, tutoring 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. Lee High School commits to continue these intensive improvement strategies and facilitate partner involvement and support in these efforts towards attaining Promise Neighborhood outcomes of successful transition to high school, high school graduation, college success, students feeling safe and supported and having access to 21st century learning tools. In addition, Lee will provide \$3,510 in-kind support (staff salary and benefits) and will identify and support the participation of two students on the Planning Council.

Houston Community College (HCC) is an open-admission, public institution of higher education offering, *‘a high-quality, affordable education for academic advancement, workforce training, career development, and lifelong learning to prepare individuals in our diverse*

communities for life and work in a global and technological society. HCC programs and activities fall within the high school, college and career portion of the service continuum and directly support Promise Neighborhood outcomes related to High School graduation and graduates obtaining a postsecondary degree or credential. HCC Southwest campuses have served the Gulfton community since 1992, offering associates degrees in a variety of academic disciplines with credits transferring to 4-year institutions and Workforce Programs leading to certifications and/or Associates of Applied Science degrees. For 10 years, HCC has partnered with Neighborhood Centers to provide adult ESL classes in the Gulfton area and has offered the College Connections Program at Lee High School for the past four. HCC agrees to identify and support two student Planning Council members, commits \$6,200 in-kind salary and benefits and, with staff members on both groups, will serve as a liaison with Southwest Houston 2000 Community Improvement Coalition.

Legacy Community Health Services' vision is to, *'continue to serve as a healthcare home by building a network of community clinics where people will feel welcomed and respected while receiving the highest quality healthcare services, regardless of their ability to pay.'* Serving Gulfton since 1991, Legacy's Southwest Clinic provides case management, prenatal, pediatric, adolescent and adult preventative care and treatment and behavioral health (early identification, teen psychiatric and counseling) programs, serving children and families across the continuum. Legacy activities in Gulfton support Promise Neighborhood outcomes of children entering kindergarten ready to learn, high school graduation and safe, healthy communities. Legacy commits \$6,250 in-kind staff time, \$1,296 in-kind classroom/meeting space and will open a new clinic in the Baker-Ripley Community Center.

Alliance for Multicultural Community Services, a 501(c)3 non-profit, has operated in Gulfton for 25 years, providing *'comprehensive social and community development services to refugees, immigrants and low-income individuals in order to enhance their economic self-sufficiency and improve their quality of life.'* Assisting 6500 individuals annually with job counseling, interpreter services, immigration consultation, English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) classes, Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) and microenterprise lending, the Alliance's most recent partnership with Neighborhood Centers is as the only year-round site for volunteer tax preparation. In improving the economic and social reality for families in Gulfton, the activities of the Alliance contribute to successes across the continuum and directly affect Promise Neighborhood outcomes related to community stability and family/community support. In addition to an in-kind commitment of \$4,000 in staff time, Alliance staff will assist in community outreach and awareness efforts, including translating and distributing surveys and other materials.

YMCA of the Greater Houston Area mission is to, *'put Judeo Christian principles into practice that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.'* In Gulfton, they have provided refugee resettlement – case management, financial and employment – services for 32 years, after-school care for 25 years; soccer and other youth programs for over 20 years. Since 2004, the YMCA has provided on-site child care for teenage parents at Lee High School, removing barriers to graduation for young mothers and providing them the support and resources needed to acquire appropriate parenting skills. YMCA activities support early childhood and K-12 education and support children entering kindergarten ready to learn, high school graduation rates, student health and community stability and support. During the planning year, YMCA staff commit to working to further expand services to children and families at Lee High School through a collaboration

with Neighborhood Centers Early Head Start program. The YMCA will also provide \$2,558 in-kind staff time to the Project.

Skills for Living, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit working in collaboration with schools, universities, nonprofit and government organizations, to, *'provide low and moderate income working families and at risk high school and college students award-winning financial, career, life skills and college planning workshops and coaching to build wealth, transform lives and break the cycle of poverty.'* Founded in 2004, Skills for Living has provided classes at Neighborhood Centers' Community Centers since its inception. In Gulfton, the 'Game of Real Life', approved by the Texas Education Agency as the first comprehensive financial, career and college planning high school curriculum, has been offered for the past two years at Lee High School and four years at YES Prep. Their work supports outcomes related to high school graduation, college success, and family/community supports. Skills for Living commits \$6,000 in-kind staff time to the Project.

Society for the Performing Arts' mission is to, *'enrich the cultural life of Houston by presenting the world's best in multi-discipline performing arts and providing one of the most innovative and comprehensive art education programs in Houston.'* Activities are based on the belief, supported by research, that exposure to the arts not only contributes to academic achievement, it extends students' appreciation and understanding of diverse cultures and enhances the quality of their lives in mind and spirit. A 501(c)3 non-profit, the Society for the Performing Arts 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 program and community dance and music performances. Society for the Performing Arts' programs support children and families at all stages of the curriculum and address Promise

Neighborhood results related to high school graduation, student health and community support. In addition to a Cinco de Mayo celebration planned for May 2011 at Baker-Ripley Community Center which will raise community awareness and excitement in the Gulfton Promise Project, the Society for the Performing Arts commits \$30,387 in-kind staff time, program materials and supplies.

United Way of Greater Houston mission is, *'to increase the organized capacity of people to care for themselves and others and to mobilize our community to make lasting improvements in critical needs areas.'* United Way funding has supported Neighborhood Centers' efforts in Gulfton for nearly 30 years – including affordable child care, family literacy, a community credit union, citizenship classes, volunteer tax preparation, health and wellness activities, financial literacy, leadership and community engagement. In addition to a financial commitment of \$3,600 in in-kind staff time and a \$75,000 cash match award, United Way will work with Neighborhood Centers and the Planning Council to expand its highly-effective Bright Beginnings Child Care quality improvement initiative (with ExxonMobil) in the Gulfton area.

ARAMARK – ARAMARK is an international for-profit business leader in professional services. First piloted in 2007, with Neighborhood Centers, and now nationwide, the *ARAMARK Building Community* initiative provides in-kind, volunteer and financial support to local non-profit organizations to increase community access to food, clothing and safe environments; build critical employment and career skills; and encourage families to live a healthier lifestyle through community health and wellness education and awareness programs. ARAMARK continues its support of Neighborhood Centers and Gulfton with a commitment of a \$25,000 cash match, \$4,800 in-kind staff time and \$12,882 in volunteer service hours for a Gulfton community project to be held in Spring 2011.

IV. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE: The Gulfton Promise Planning Council (Advisory Board) is made up of diverse individuals – at least one third of which are low-income and/or reside in Gulfton - representing a variety of expertise and experience across the birth-adulthood service continuum (both as providers and participants). In addition to staff representatives from Neighborhood Centers’ and each of the twelve (12) educational, service and funding partners described above, two (2) students from Lee High School, two (2) students from Houston Community College (one traditional age and one adult), two (2) members of the existing Baker-Ripley Advisory Committee and the New Horizon EHS/Head Start Parent Committee Chairperson will also serve on the Council. To facilitate communication and support between the Neighborhood Centers’ Board and the Gulfton Promise Planning Council, a member of the Council will sit on the Community-Based Initiatives Committee of the Board and vice versa. Leadership of the Council will be shared between a Chairperson, elected by the members from the membership, and the Project Director, employed by Neighborhood Centers Inc.

In addition to monthly meeting of the entire Council, three subcommittees will be formed – Assessment and Evaluation, Funding and Communications/Outreach. Subcommittees will meet at least once a month and will be open to other partner staff, volunteers and community members. Responsibility for coordinating each subcommittee and for recruiting non-Council members with appropriate expertise will be assigned to Project staff. Primary responsibility for completion and distribution of meeting minutes, action item follow-up and other Council support as requested by members, will be provided by the Project Director.

While every effort will be made to build consensus among Planning Council members, as the awarded grantee, Neighborhood Centers Inc. and its Governing Board of Directors, will have final decision-making authority for programmatic and fiscal decisions pertaining to

Neighborhood Centers’ programs and the planning and implementation of Gulfton Promise Neighborhood. Partner agency and organizations retain full authority over their own programs and activities. Specific processes and mechanisms for inviting new partners to join, holding existing partners accountable for commitments etc. will be developed by the Planning Council as part of written by-laws.

Neighborhood Centers Inc.	Ripley House Charter School	Benavidez Elementary
_____ Angela Blanchard Date President and CEO	_____ Pamela Sailors Date Superintendent of Schools	_____ Martin Garza Date Principal
YES Prep. Public Schools	Lee High School	Houston Community College
_____ Chris Barbic Date Founder and CEO	_____ Barbara Thornhill Date School Improvement Officer	_____ Dr. Fena Garza Date President, HCC Southwest
Legacy Community Health Services	Alliance for Multicultural Community Services	YMCA of the Greater Houston Area
_____ Katherine Caldwell Date Executive Director	_____ Kassahun Bisrat Date Executive Director	_____ Linda Lykos Date VP Financial Development
Skills for Living, Inc.	Society for the Performing Arts	United Way of Greater Houston
_____ Lorraine Decker Date President	_____ June Christensen Date Executive Director	_____ Anna Babin Date President and CEO
ARAMARK		
_____ Holly Montalbano Date VP of External Affairs		