Analyzing the Effectiveness of Houston's Complete Communities Initiative

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Background

- The Complete Communities Initiative is a program developed by the City of Houston in 2017 designed to address historical disparities in underserved neighborhoods and generate holistic rehabilitation
- The Complete Communities Initiative has incorporated ten super neighborhoods in Houston, five of which were adopted in the beginning stages of the program-Phase I-and the other five in the more current years-Phase II
- Phase I communities- **Acres Home, Gulfton, Near Northside, Second Ward, and Third Ward**- were selected for analysis as program efforts have been occurring for the longest period of time in these neighborhoods
- The City of Houston has delegated the rehabilitative tasks into 9 sectors termed "Project Areas," which are standardized across all communities and include goals for improvement and strategies to achieve those goals
- This research includes the Project Area goals that had measurable metrics and accessible data for analysis
- The goal of this research is to analyze the Complete Communities Initiative and to answer the essential question:
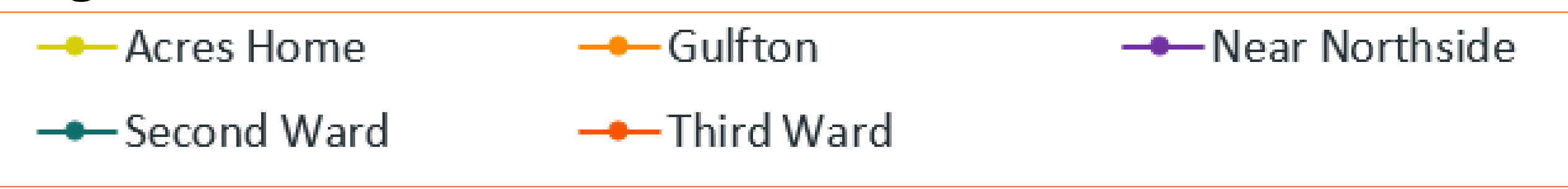
> **Has the Complete Communities Initiative been effective in pilot communities?**

Methodology

- Action Plans, which were released in early 2018 for Phase I neighborhood, were analyzed for each of the five neighborhoods to determine whether or not project areas were unique to each neighborhood as well as entities responsible for carrying out each project
- It was determined that Project Areas, project leads, and metrics to achieve were standardized across all five neighborhoods, but variation in Action Plans resulted from community-specific involvement from local entities
- Two data sources were used to graph metrics taken from the Action Plans: The Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) data and the Texas Education Agency's Texas Academic Performance Reporting (TAPR) data
- The ACS data was utilized for *Economy and Jobs*, *Health*, *Housing*, and *Mobility and Infrastructure* Project Areas
- The metrics included in Action Plans for *Economy and Jobs*, *Health*, and *Housing* were 2015 data, so the values were plotted on a line graph by neighborhood from 2015-2018, which is the most recently released dataset
- Each Project Area goal was evaluated by census tract and averaged to determine the mean value for each neighborhood by year
- The Project Area goal for *Mobility and Infrastructure* included in the Action Plans was 2018 data, which was plotted using a bar graph as opposed to a line graph
- TAPR data was utilized for the *Education* Project Area and also had data reported in the Action Plans from 2015
- TEA Standards for every school in each neighborhood were measured and averaged to determine the percentage of schools meeting standards by neighborhood
- This process was the evaluation technique for each year from 2015-2019 (most recently released data) and all values were plotted on a line graph by neighborhood
- All data analysis was completed in Microsoft Excel

Results

Legend:

- Acres Home
- Gulfton
- Near Northside
- Second Ward
- Third Ward

* on target refers to neighborhoods that have met target metrics or are close to meeting target metrics

Economy and Jobs

Figure 1: Target unemployment rate for all neighborhoods at 4%. As of the end of 2018, Gulfton is on target* with a 3.9% unemployment rate.
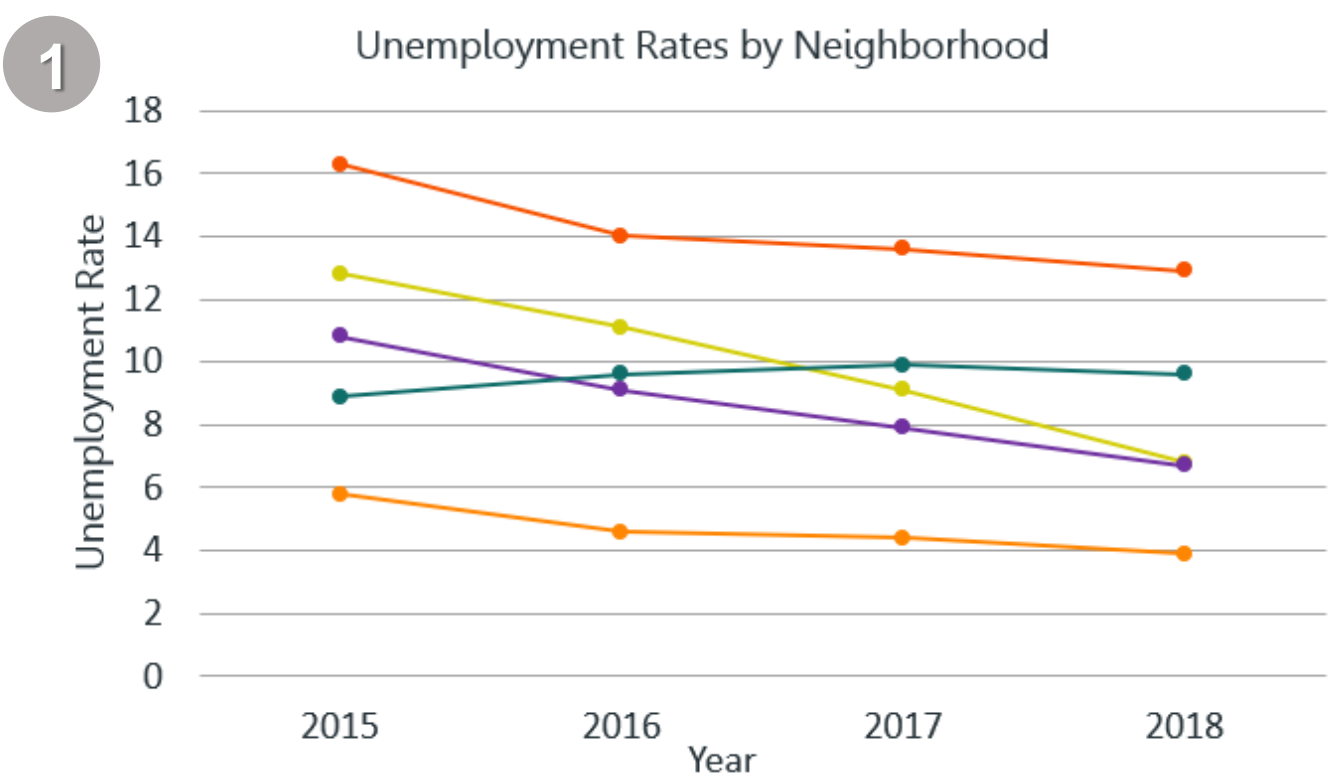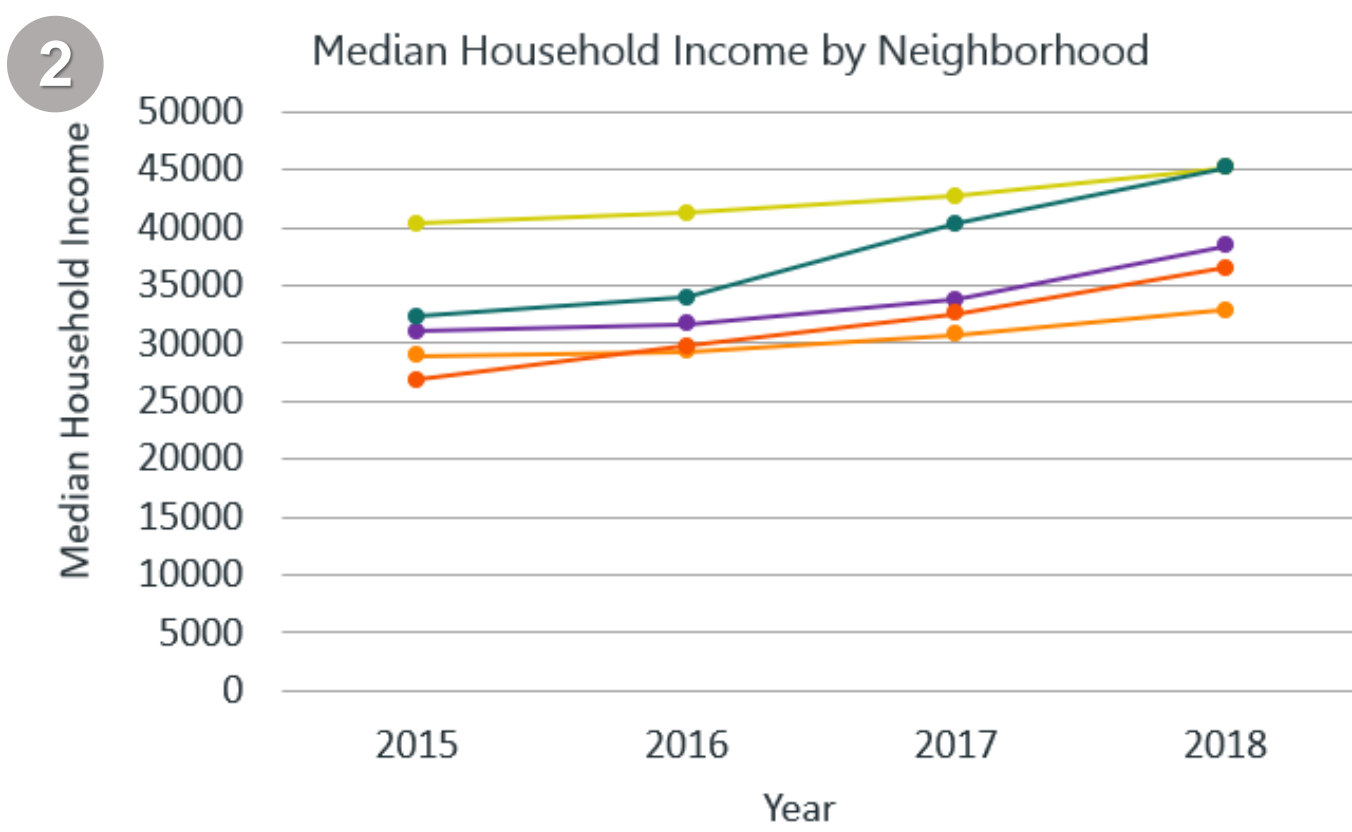

Figure 2: Target median household income at $46,000. Acres Home and Second Ward on target in 2018 at $45,159 and $45,119, respectively.

Housing

Figure 3: Target percentage of homeowners paying over 30% of income at 25% of neighborhood population. As of 2018, Acres Home is on target at 26.6%.
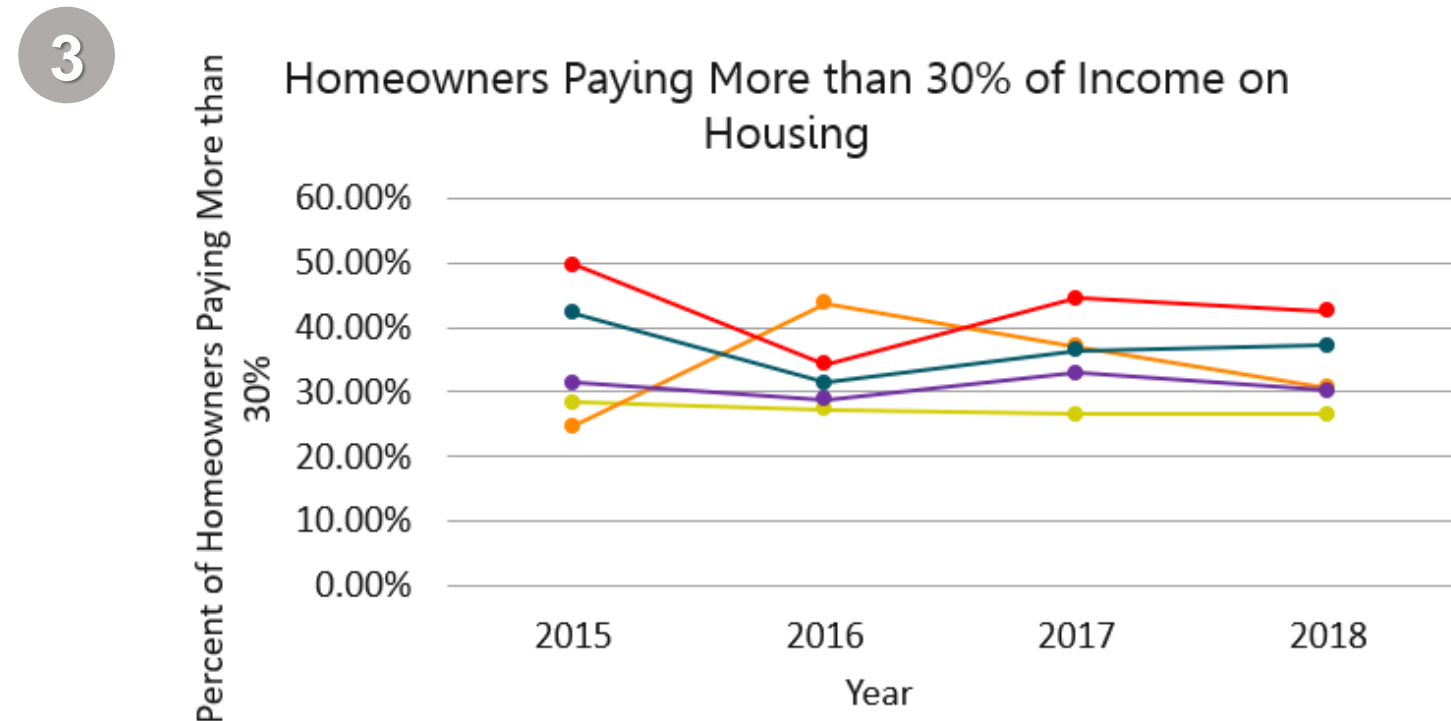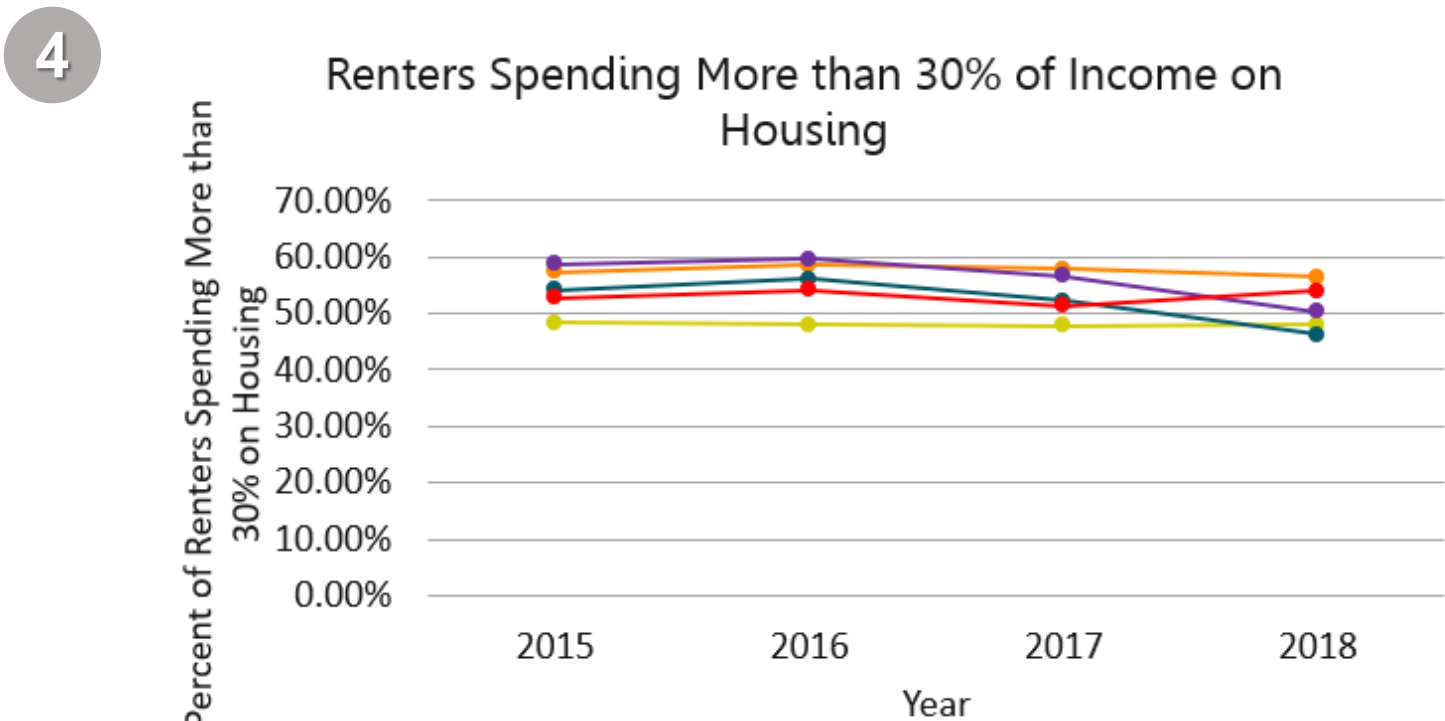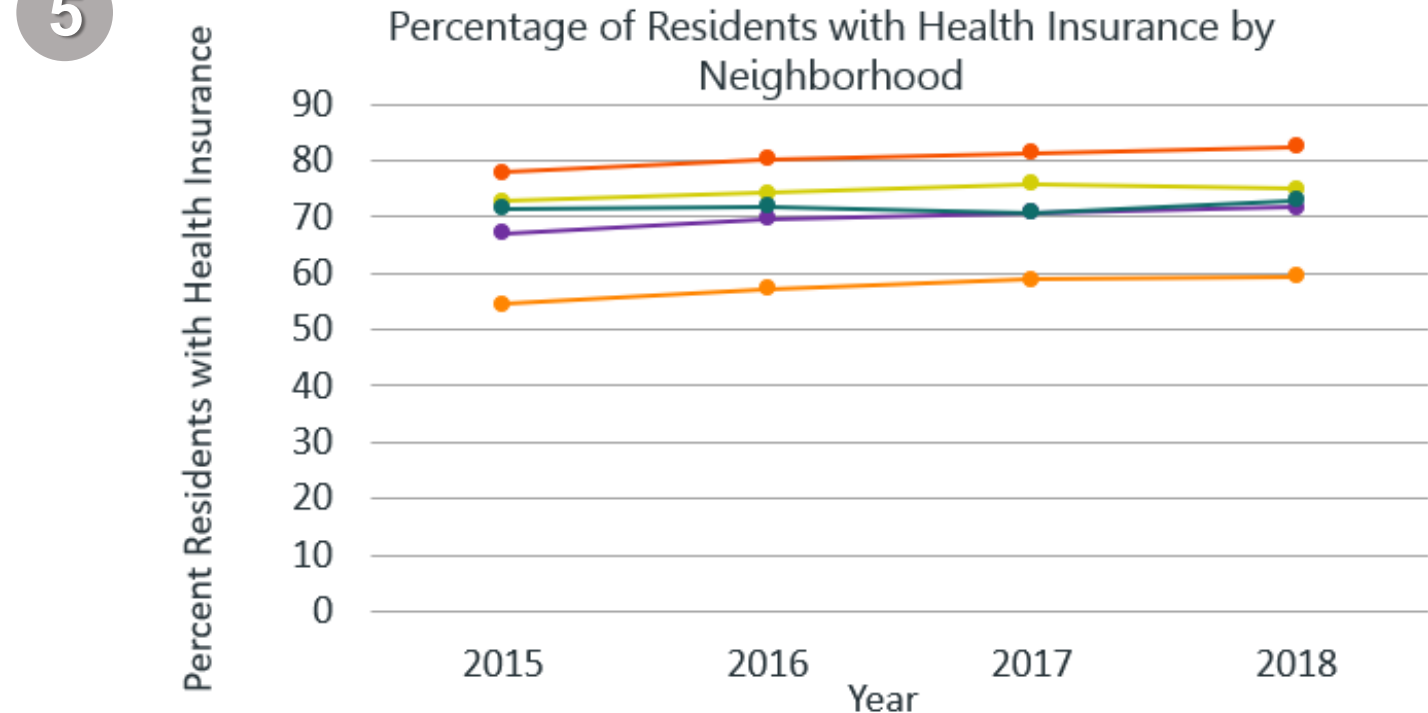

Figure 4: Target percentage of renters paying over 30% of income at 47%. As of 2018, Acres Home and Second Ward are on target at 47.9% and 46.3%.
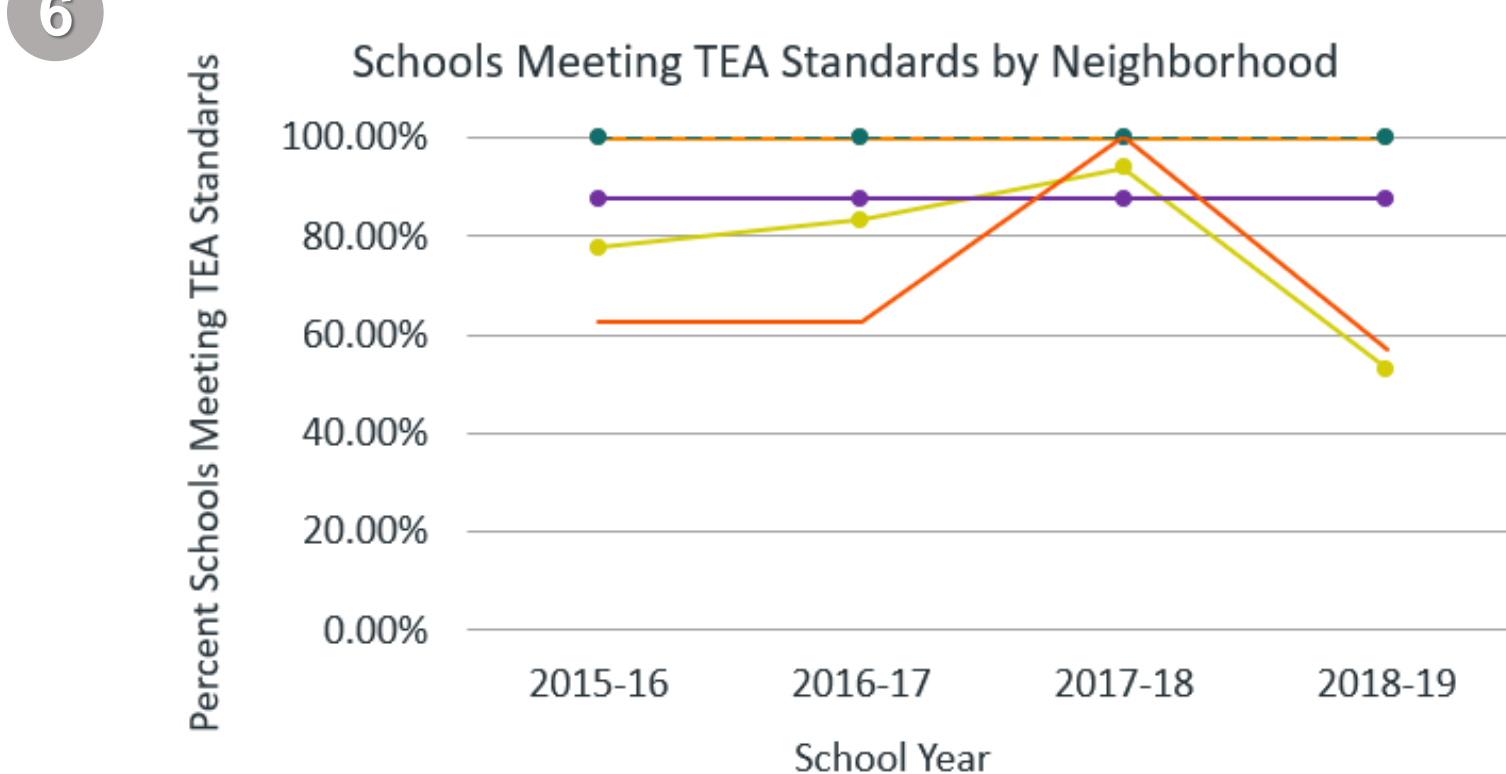

Health

Figure 5: Target percentage of residents with health insurance at 73%. As of 2018, Acres Home, Near Northside, and Second Ward are on target at 75%, 71.6%, and 73%.
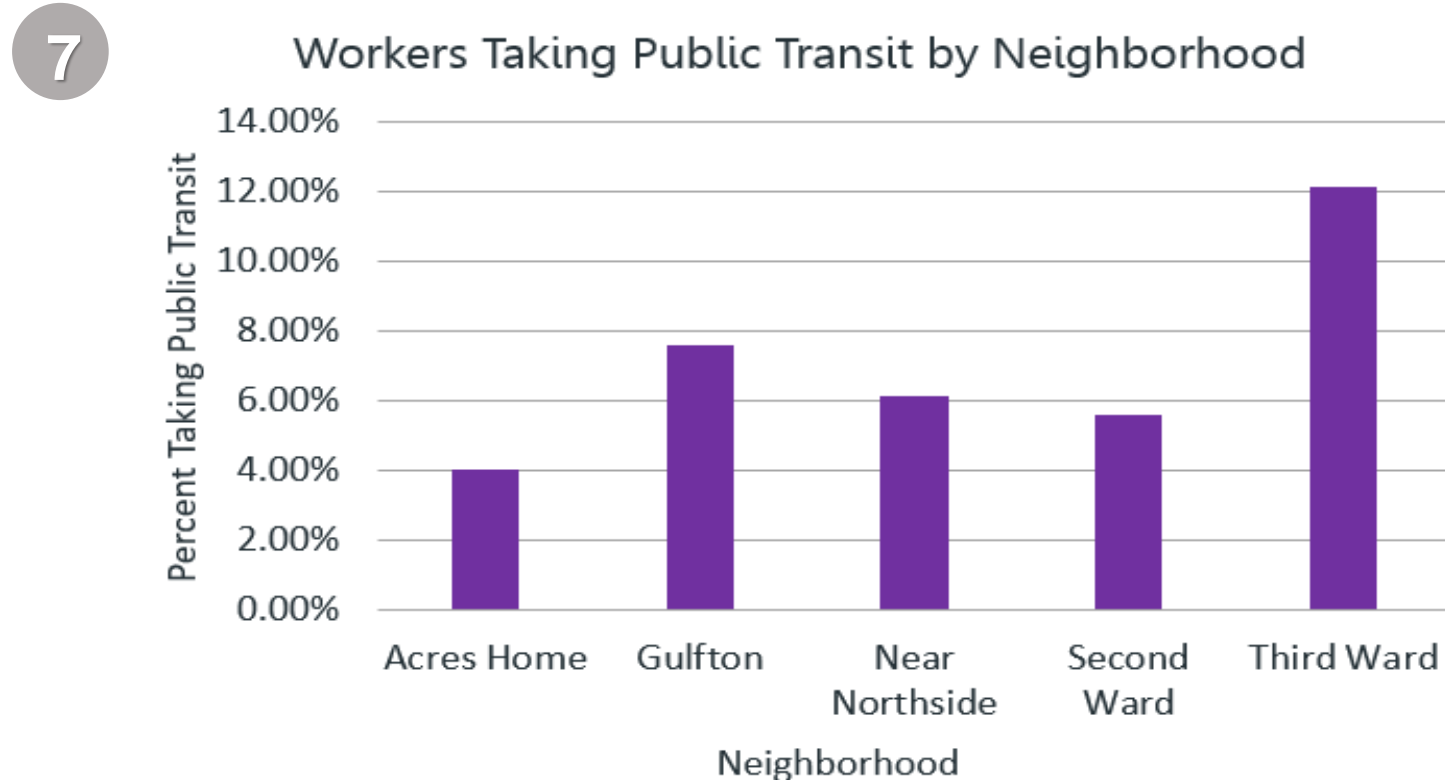

Education

Figure 6: Target percentage of schools meeting TEA Standards at 100%. As of 2018, Gulfton and Second Ward are on target at 100%.

Mobility and Infrastructure

Figure 7: Target public transit usage at 12%. As of 2018, Third Ward is on target at 12.1%.
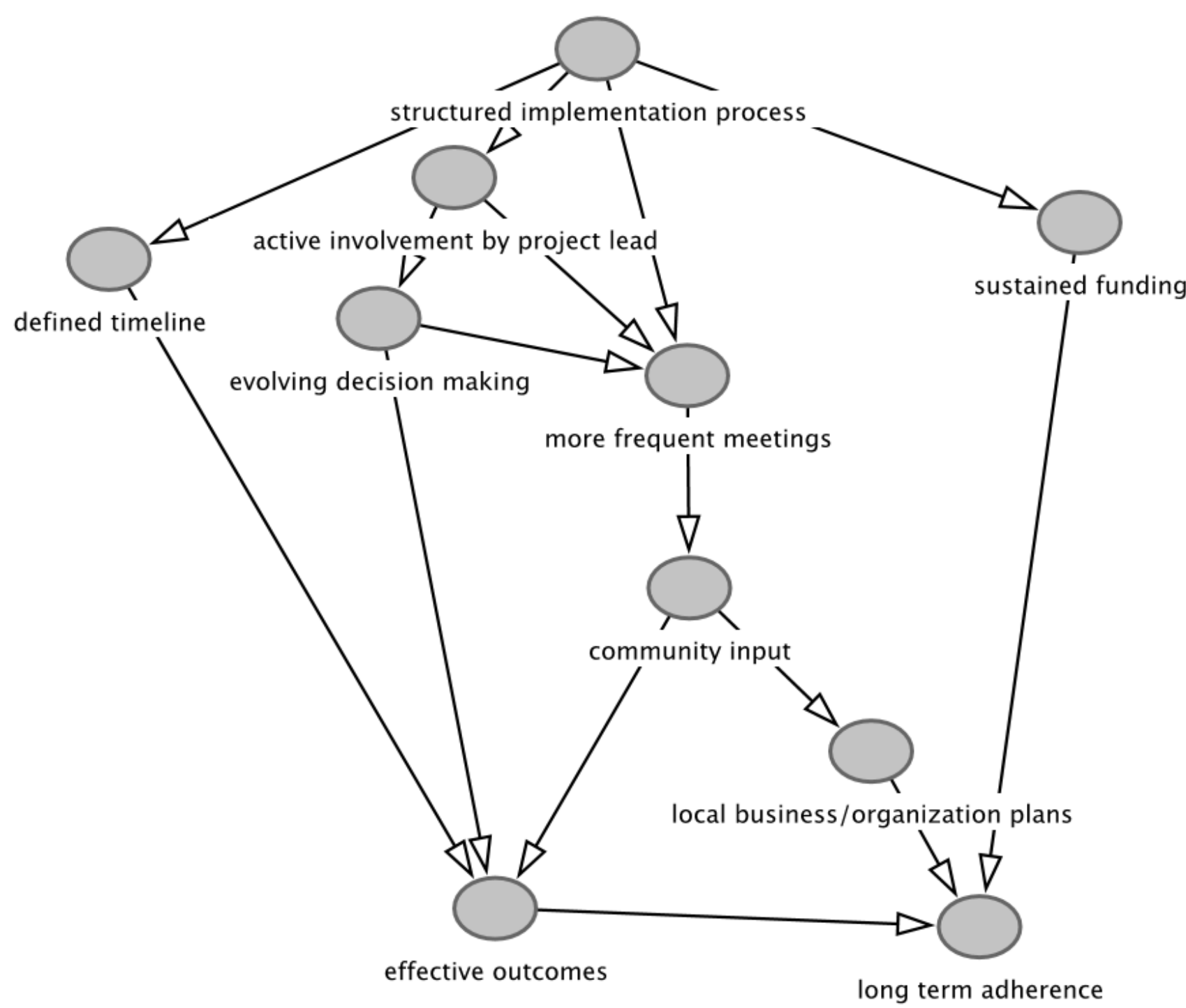
Abstract

The Complete Communities Initiative is a program launched in 2017 by the City of Houston designed to address and improve issues within historically underserved communities. The Initiative currently has two phases which divides the ten participating neighborhoods in half by pilot communities and newly added communities. This project aims to analyze the effectiveness of the Complete Communities Initiative implementation in the first five pilot communities. Action Plans detailing steps for improvement and implementation were examined by community- Acres Homes, Gulfton, Near Northside, Second Ward, and Third Ward- to determine standardized and neighborhood-specific goals. Analysis of ACS 5-year estimates and TAPR data suggest that there has been improvement for multiple project area goals for each neighborhood but occurred too close to the inception of the program to be directly attributed to the implementation phase of the Complete Communities Initiative. Reform of the existing program to develop more rigid standards would contribute to increased success.

Conclusion

- Goals have been met across different Project Areas, however it is evident that most neighborhoods have been trending toward those goals since the reported values in 2015
- Action Plans were released in 2018 for Phase I communities, so it is not clear if the goals reached by the end of 2018 can be attributed to the Complete Community Initiative's implementation phase or the natural trend of each Project Area's metrics toward the goals specified
- The Complete Communities Initiative needs to indicate clearer implementation steps to clearly delineate the program's effects on each neighborhood- in the Action Plans, steps to achieve each target goal was vague and difficult to pinpoint specifics

Directed Thinking for Future Improvement

- The directed acyclic graph above details steps that could be taken by the City of Houston to ensure sustained improvement following the implementation phase of the Complete Communities Initiative as well as potential changes to the existing structure of the program.

Contact Information

For comments, questions, or further discussion about this project, feel free to contact me at krbaham@uh.edu.

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