

RISE Third Ward - Resilience Initiative for Sustainable Empowerment

Houston Housing Authority's Application to EPA: Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change Grants Program

Section A. Executive Summary

Application Title: RISE Third Ward - Resilience Initiative for Sustainable Empowerment

Program Goals: The RISE Third Ward project aligns with the Community Change Grant's mission to "empower communities," emphasizing equity and environmental justice. Inspired by the Third Ward-Cuney Homes Transformation Plan, it integrates climate action and pollution reduction strategies rooted in Third Ward's unique history and aspirations. The project supports the EPA's National Resilience Framework 2023 and the 2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan (focusing on climate crisis and environmental justice goals) using PMI's program management phases. RISE Third Ward targets the National Heat Strategy's 2024-2030 Goal 3 by developing an accelerated approvals process for Resilience Hubs, ensuring compliance with EPA timelines. A community-driven, government-coordinated emergency response will be deployed, using the Houston Resilience Hub Network Toolkit and FEMA's readiness framework. Empowerment tools include action plans from the HUD Extreme Heat Playbook, the Comprehensive Housing Plan Framework for Houston, and a Community Benefits Agreement executed through a Program Charter, supporting a Community Workforce Agreement.

Lead Applicant: Houston Housing Authority (HHA). RISE Third Ward aligns with the Houston Housing Authority's (HHA) FY 2024 Part I Annual PHA Plan and its Partnership Agreement (Attachment B) by fostering collaborative partnerships to enhance community outcomes. The Partnership Agreement emphasizes HHA's commitment to engaging with key stakeholders to support holistic neighborhood revitalization, as demonstrated in this grant application through the collaboration with Friends of Columbia Tap, the Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice at Texas Southern University ("Bullard Center"), and other collaborating organizations such as Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC), SHAPE Center, and Civic Heart. These partnerships aim to strengthen workforce development, improve housing conditions, and foster economic empowerment in the Third Ward. Additionally, the grant application supports coordination with the City of Houston's Office of Recovery and Resilience by ensuring that the five proposed Community Resilience Hubs at Cuney Homes Community Center, Third Ward Multi-Service Center, EEDC, SHAPE Center, and Civic Heart integrate seamlessly into the city's broader emergency preparedness and response framework. This collaboration enables HHA to enhance the resilience of public housing communities, particularly in Third Ward, ensuring residents are better prepared for extreme weather events and other emergencies.

Statutory Partner to the Lead Applicant: Friends of Columbia Tap (FOCT). Friends of Columbia Tap's primary role in RISE Third Ward is to lead the implementation of nature-based solutions, focusing on green infrastructure projects that will improve environmental resilience, reduce urban heat island effects, and create healthier living spaces for residents in Third Ward. Their

efforts include tree canopies, bioswales, and the revitalization of underutilized public spaces like the Columbia Tap Trail. While their primary focus is on nature-based solutions, they will also assist with resilience coordination, supporting the establishment of Community Resilience Hubs that will enhance emergency preparedness for residents in collaboration with the City of Houston's Office of Recovery and Resilience.

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Eligibility: Houston Housing Authority, the Lead Applicant on this project, and Friends of Columbia Tap, the Statutory Partner, are community-based organizations (CBOs) as defined in 2 CFR 200.1.

Climate Action Strategies: (1) Green Infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions; (5) Community Resilience Hubs; and (8) Workforce Development Programs for Occupations that Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Air Pollutants.

Pollution Reduction Strategy: (2) Outdoor Air Quality and Community Health Improvements.

Grant Award Period and Completion: January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2027

Amount of EPA Funding Requested: \$20,000,000

Disadvantaged Communities to Benefit from RISE Third Ward: In the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl, 76-year-old Carol Samuel, a resident of the Law Harrington Senior Living Center in Houston's Third Ward, found herself trapped in her apartment, unable to escape due to broken elevators and widespread power outages. Like many others in this historically underserved neighborhood, Carol faced significant challenges, including severe health problems like neuropathy, a lack of access to cooling centers, and a dangerous shortage of basic necessities such as water (Texas Observer, 2024). For days, she, along with other vulnerable residents, endured unbearable heat and isolation with no outside support. The breakdown in communication and coordination among local government agencies left Carol and many others to fend for themselves for as long as 10 days. Third Ward, home to 13,888 residents—91.7% of whom are people of color—endures substantial vulnerabilities, including inadequate housing, limited access to green spaces, and elevated pollution levels. Health issues such as diabetes and asthma are prevalent, compounding the effects of environmental challenges like extreme heat. Carol's experience underscores the urgent need for focused interventions, such as improved emergency preparedness, housing advocacy, and resilience-building measures, to improve the overall living conditions and socioeconomic outcomes in Third Ward (Texas Observer, 2024).

Other Sources of Funding: The funds that we seek in this application include 100% of the costs associated with the project. As requested by the Duplicate Funding clause included the NOFO (Section V.E), this proposal has not been submitted to another funding source.

Resubmission Status: This is the first time this application has been submitted.

Section B. Project Workplan

Part 1. Community Driven Investments for Change

1.1 Community Vision Description

Community Description

The RISE Third Ward initiative aligns seamlessly with the mission of the Community Change Grant to empower communities through equitable, community-driven climate preparedness. This program centers on Houston’s Third Ward, a culturally vibrant, predominantly Black neighborhood known for its historical significance and resilient spirit. Despite its rich heritage, Third Ward faces pronounced socio-economic challenges, including a poverty rate of nearly 39%—more than double the citywide rate—and an unemployment rate of 11.6%, exacerbating the community’s vulnerabilities to climate change (Third Ward Cuney Homes Choice Neighborhood Plan, 2024). Third Ward houses approximately 13,828 residents across six census tracts, including 48201312300, 48201312200, 48201312400, and 48201312800 (Third Ward Cuney Homes Choice Neighborhood Plan, 2024). Cuney Homes, a significant feature of the neighborhood, is an older public housing development built in 1939 that accommodates 553 units, primarily housing African American residents. The median income in Third Ward is starkly lower than Houston’s citywide median of \$56,019, with some census tracts reporting median incomes as low as \$13,750 (Third Ward Cuney Homes Choice Neighborhood Plan, 2024). Health disparities are a critical concern for Third Ward. Chronic illnesses such as diabetes and asthma affect the area disproportionately, with rates ranking in the 90th percentile or higher for several census tracts (Third Ward Cuney Homes Choice Neighborhood Plan, 2024). Disability rates are also elevated, with up to 44% of Cuney Homes residents reporting disabilities (Third Ward Cuney Homes Choice Neighborhood Plan, 2024). These factors contribute to the community’s vulnerability to climate impacts, such as extreme heat, urban heat islands, and flooding.

RISE Third Ward responds to these intersecting challenges with a multi-faceted approach to resilience. By integrating green infrastructure projects, such as tree canopy expansion and resilience hub solar panel installation, the program aims to reduce urban heat island effects, improve air quality, and increase access to shaded and green spaces. The initiative also invests in economic resilience through workforce development programs, such as the Environmental Career Worker Training Program (ECWTP) led by the Bullard Center, which equips residents with certifications and pathways to stable employment in environmental fields. To further enhance resilience, the program has established several Community Resilience Hubs across Third Ward. These include Cuney Homes Community Center, Third Ward Multi-Service Center, SHAPE Center, Civic Heart, and Emancipation Economic Development Council, all of which are equipped with solar panels and, where needed, backup generators. These hubs not only provide critical resources during emergencies but also serve as venues for community engagement and preparedness training, reinforcing local capacity to adapt to climate challenges. RISE Third Ward empowers residents to take active roles in shaping their neighborhood’s future. By addressing disparities in health, housing, and economic opportunity, while fostering resilience to climate impacts, the initiative works toward a vision of sustainable, equitable growth for one of Houston’s most historically significant neighborhoods.

Community Challenges

Community members in Third Ward face several critical challenges that severely impact their health and well-being. Heat-related illnesses are a major concern, driven by increasingly intense heat waves, low tree canopy coverage, and inadequate access to cooling centers. Nearly 90% of the area lacks sufficient green space, ranking the neighborhood in the 90th percentile nationally for this deficiency (Third Ward Cuney Homes Choice Neighborhood Plan, 2024). This issue has been frequently raised during community meetings, underscoring the urgent need for better cooling solutions. Recent storms, including Winter Storm Uri, left many residents, particularly in Cuney Homes, without power for extended periods, resulting in fatalities primarily due to extreme heat during widespread outages (Third Ward Cuney Homes Choice Neighborhood Plan, 2024).

The community also grapples with frequent respiratory issues, including asthma, which affects residents at rates in the 90th percentile nationally. High levels of air pollution from diesel particulate matter and heavy highway traffic emissions rank the area in the 91st and 98th percentiles, respectively (Third Ward Cuney Homes Choice Neighborhood Plan, 2024). Moldy, dilapidated housing exacerbates these issues, with 87% of Cuney Homes residents reporting they live in inadequate housing conditions, often worsened by flooding and water damage. These conditions not only cause physical health problems but also contribute to financial stress for many low-income households (Third Ward Cuney Homes Choice Neighborhood Plan, 2024).

In addition to environmental health risks, Third Ward suffers from limited access to safe recreational spaces. The lack of green spaces and parks is compounded by unsafe conditions in existing areas due to poor infrastructure and disrepair. Historic underinvestment has left the neighborhood with insufficient outdoor amenities, and 18% of homes in the area are vacant, reflecting systemic neglect (Third Ward Cuney Homes Choice Neighborhood Plan, 2024). These barriers hinder community engagement and physical activity, exacerbating health disparities.

Economic challenges further compound these issues. The poverty rate in Third Ward is nearly 40%, with some census tracts reporting median incomes as low as \$13,750, far below Houston's citywide median of \$56,019 (Third Ward Cuney Homes Choice Neighborhood Plan, 2024). Unemployment rates in the area exceed 11%, more than double the city's average. These economic disparities contribute to inadequate housing, limited healthcare access, and poor educational opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and health inequities.

Addressing these challenges requires targeted and sustained interventions that prioritize the community's needs. The proposed project will focus on improving energy resilience through solar panel installations at community resilience hubs, increasing green spaces by expanding the urban tree canopy and enhancing parks, and promoting public health through community-driven initiatives. Workforce training programs, such as the Environmental Career Worker Training Program (ECWTP), aim to build a skilled workforce to support climate resilience, fostering long-term sustainability for Third Ward.

Community Vision

The RISE Third Ward project aims to significantly improve the quality of life for residents by fostering sustainable economic growth, promoting environmental stewardship, and ensuring

equitable benefits through community-led initiatives. Addressing the neighborhood’s environmental, economic, and health challenges, RISE focuses on green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, community resilience hubs, workforce development programs, and outdoor air quality improvement. These strategies are implemented through community-driven planning sessions, partnerships with local organizations, sustainable infrastructure investments, and targeted training and employment programs, ensuring that the impact is both lasting and meaningful.

Imagine Kirk Jackson, a resident of Cuney Homes, who, through the RISE Third Ward project’s workforce development program, has just completed his training as a solar tech installer. Equipped with new skills, Kirk is now a key player in strengthening his neighborhood’s resilience, providing emergency support, and contributing to a healthier environment. Early on, Kirk helps set up a community resilience hub at the Cuney Homes Community Center. This hub is stocked with emergency provisions—backup generators, solar power supplies, and walkie-talkies—to ensure that residents, like Larry Nelson, who depend on medical devices, have access to vital resources during power outages.

As the project develops, so does Kirk’s role. With additional training in emergency preparedness and community engagement, he becomes a mentor to new trainees, guiding them as they join the Bullard Center’s Green Workforce Development program. He shares his journey and encourages others to pursue careers in renewable energy, sustainable construction, and environmental remediation. His work extends to hands-on green infrastructure projects with Friends of Columbia Tap, from planting tree canopies to creating green spaces, which improve air quality and help mitigate the urban heat island effect in Third Ward.

With the support of the Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC), Kirk joins efforts to establish a worker-owned Green Infrastructure Cooperative, providing the neighborhood with sustainable employment opportunities while fostering a culture of environmental stewardship. Over time, Kirk and other program graduates contribute to a network of green spaces, parks, and resilient infrastructure throughout Third Ward. The neighborhood blossoms into a model of sustainability, with safe public spaces, improved air quality, and well-maintained parks. When extreme weather strikes, the community’s network of resilience hubs serves as lifelines, reducing fatalities and enhancing overall resilience.

Kirk’s journey from a trainee to a community leader underscores the transformative power of the RISE project. Grounded in the Third Ward-Cuney Homes Transformation Plan—a comprehensive vision shaped by residents—RISE empowers Third Ward to thrive as a resilient, sustainable community where residents like Kirk play a central role in shaping their neighborhood’s future.

1.2 Selected Strategies

Strategy Overview

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA), Friends of Columbia Tap (FOCT), and partners have created a comprehensive initiative for Third Ward’s disadvantaged communities, fully aligned with the Justice40 initiative. The project focuses on four primary strategies: Green Infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions, Community Resilience Hubs, Workforce Development Programs for

Clean Energy Careers, and Outdoor Air Quality and Community Health Improvements. Together, these strategies provide a holistic approach to tackling the neighborhood's challenges while building a skilled workforce for the future.

A core element is workforce development, grounded in the Bullard Center's Environmental Career Worker Training Program (ECWTP), which prepares residents for jobs in renewable energy, sustainable construction, and environmental remediation. This initiative supports economic stability and empowerment, ensuring that 40% of federal investment benefits reach disadvantaged communities, as outlined by Justice40.

Green Infrastructure projects, such as tree canopies, green roofs, and bioswales, will enhance environmental resilience by mitigating urban heat, improving air and water quality, and creating engaging public spaces. Community Resilience Hubs equipped with solar and natural gas generators, along with disaster response supplies, will prepare residents for emergencies. Training for Community Health Workers and community leaders in emergency response further strengthens the neighborhood's crisis readiness.

Climate Action Strategies

Climate Action Strategy 1: Green Infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions

With oversight from the Houston Housing Authority (HHA), Friends of Columbia Tap (FOCT) will lead the Green Infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions initiative in Third Ward, focusing on equity by addressing the area's disproportionate environmental challenges. In this historically underserved community, low tree canopy coverage, urban heat islands, poor air quality, and limited green spaces present serious health risks. This initiative aims to mitigate these issues by increasing tree canopy and green infrastructure along the Columbia Tap Trail and Cuney Homes campus, benefiting low-income residents most affected by these conditions.

Aligned with FEMA's Core Capabilities for Economic Recovery and Natural and Cultural Resources, the project will transform vacant lots and underutilized spaces into vibrant green areas. This includes planting native trees to reduce surface temperatures, improve air quality, and lower energy costs, especially benefiting residents burdened by high utility bills and health risks from extreme heat. Partnering with the City of Houston Office of Recovery and Resilience, the project will also enhance stormwater management and reduce flooding risks in low-income areas through green roofs and walls on public buildings, which will support local wildlife.

Climate Action Strategy 5: Community Resilience Hubs

The proposed project aims to empower individuals and communities in Third Ward by significantly enhancing resilience through a comprehensive approach aligned with FEMA's Core Capabilities of Community Resilience, Long-Term Vulnerability Reduction, and Risk and Disaster Resilience Assessment. A key element of this effort is leveraging the City of Houston's Resilience Hub Network, as outlined in the City of Houston Resilience Hub Toolkit, which provides a framework for building resilience through local facilities and service providers. Under this framework, the project will explore the potential of Cuney Homes Community Center as a Super Spot—a critical hub within a broader network of Community Resilience Hub Spots, which will be supported by nearby hubs at the Third Ward Multi-Service Center, Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC), SHAPE Center, and Civic Heart.

These Community Resilience Hubs will be equipped with essential emergency provisions, including backup generators, solar power supplies, and communication tools, ensuring that weather-related communications reach residents and that the community is protected during disasters. Following the Resilience Hub model, these centers will serve as trusted spaces where the community can access not only emergency support but also everyday services that promote well-being during non-disaster times.

The initiative will recruit and train Community Health Workers from within the community, selecting individuals who are already engaged locally or demonstrate strong leadership potential. Training will be conducted at the SHAPE Center, where Community Health Workers will learn emergency preparedness, leadership, and coordination skills, empowering them to manage resources, mobilize disaster response, and support neighbors effectively. To ensure the sustainability of this role, Community Health Workers will receive ongoing mentorship, stipends, resources, and childcare support to reduce barriers to participation.

Climate Action Strategy 8: Workforce Development Programs for Occupations that Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Air Pollutants

The Bullard Center’s Green Workforce Development initiative, informed by the Texas Climate Jobs Project’s Power & People 2024 report, aims to equip 125 residents from historically marginalized groups—including opportunity youth, returning citizens, and veterans—with skills for careers in the green economy. Addressing the specific needs of Texas, the initiative emphasizes heat safety and worker resilience, preparing participants for roles in solar installation, HVAC, and energy efficiency.

Guided by a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) to ensure fair wages, labor protections, and improved working conditions, the initiative also includes advocacy training, enabling participants to support their workplace rights. The Bullard Center’s proven Environmental Career Worker Training Program (ECWTP), with a 90% job placement rate, serves as a model, offering a curriculum combining classroom instruction with hands-on lab work to ensure technical proficiency and long-term career sustainability. The program prioritizes gender equity and diversity, and provides stipends and wrap-around services to support trainees’ personal and financial needs, with additional entrepreneurship support for those aiming to launch sustainable businesses.

Climate Action Strategies and the Community Vision

The selected Climate Action Strategies for Third Ward are designed to address both immediate and long-term needs, in alignment with the community’s vision for resilience and equity. Green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, including the planting of shade trees, restoration of native plant habitats, bioswales, and rain gardens, will help mitigate the urban heat island effect, improve air quality, and enhance stormwater management, providing immediate environmental benefits to residents.

To promote sustainable economic growth, the Green Workforce Development program will train historically excluded residents for high-quality careers in renewable energy, sustainable construction, and environmental remediation, empowering them with well-paying, stable jobs. Additionally, support will be provided to establish a Green Infrastructure Cooperative, creating more economic opportunities for local residents. Locals will be hired preferentially for green

infrastructure projects and the development of Community Resilience Hubs, ensuring that job opportunities benefit the community directly.

The project will also establish a network of Community Resilience Hubs and train Community Health Workers to lead emergency preparedness efforts, equipping the neighborhood with critical resources and support during climate-related events. Partnering with local experts like Naomi Carrier of the Texas Center for African American Living History, the initiative will ensure alignment with the community's historical and cultural vision. Educational workshops and community activities will empower residents with sustainable practices, fostering pride, ownership, and a commitment to environmental stewardship that strengthens community resilience for the future.

Pollution Reduction Strategies

Pollution Reduction Strategy 2: Outdoor Air Quality and Community Health Improvements

Aligned with the goals of Air Alliance Houston's Environmental Justice Leadership Lab (EJLL), this project addresses the environmental and health challenges facing Third Ward, emphasizing air quality, health equity, and economic resilience as detailed in *Attachment F: Community Strength – Empowerment Plan.* Supporting FEMA's Recovery mission with a focus on Core Capability 5: Economic Recovery and Core Capability 6: Health and Social Services, the project aims to alleviate the environmental burdens disproportionately affecting low-income communities and communities of color.

Third Ward faces persistent issues with poor air quality from traffic pollution, mold in homes, water contamination from stormwater runoff, and urban heat islands due to limited green spaces. These factors contribute to elevated rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, and other health problems, particularly among vulnerable residents. To address these challenges, the project will implement nature-based solutions—bioswales, rain gardens, tree canopies, and native plantings—that will improve air and water quality, reduce urban heat, and provide residents with cleaner, greener surroundings. These efforts align with EJLL's mission to empower communities to advocate for improved air quality and healthier environments.

A crucial component of the project is the training of Community Health Workers in partnership with the SHAPE Center. These workers will be trained to support residents in addressing health hazards related to poor indoor air quality and mold, providing education on mold mitigation and preventative measures for asthma and other respiratory issues. The Community Health Workers will also lead outreach to increase awareness of air quality and health equity issues and build community capacity for advocacy.

Additionally, the Bullard Center at Texas Southern University will lead a workforce development program focused on energy efficiency, weatherization, appliance upgrades, and mold remediation techniques, all aimed at reducing energy consumption and indoor air pollution. This initiative further supports EJLL's mission by empowering residents to maintain healthier, safer homes.

Workshops on homeownership, environmental stewardship, and mold mitigation will empower residents with practical skills, contributing to long-term resilience and self-sufficiency. By improving both outdoor and indoor air quality, reducing energy consumption, and enhancing

public health, the project ensures that the benefits of pollution reduction and economic resilience reach every community member equitably. The integration of EJLL’s approach underscores a deep commitment to environmental justice, positioning Third Ward for a sustainable, healthier future.

Pollution Reduction Strategies and Community Vision

These activities directly support the community vision for RISE Third Ward by enhancing environmental resilience, economic opportunity, and health equity for residents. By implementing green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, the project mitigates urban heat, improves air quality, and addresses pollution—transforming the neighborhood into a healthier, greener space. Workforce development programs led by the Bullard Center equip residents with high-demand skills in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and mold mitigation, providing stable, well-paying jobs that foster economic growth within the community. The training of Community Health Workers at the SHAPE Center further ensures that residents have access to critical health resources and education on indoor air quality and mold mitigation, empowering them to maintain safer homes and advocate for cleaner environments. Through these combined efforts, RISE Third Ward builds a stronger, more resilient community that embodies the values of sustainability, empowerment, and equity, advancing the long-term vision of a thriving, self-reliant Third Ward.

1.3 Community Engagement and Collaborative Governance Plan

See Attachment E: “Community Engagement and Collaborative Governance Plan.”

1.4 Community Strength Plan

See Attachment F: “Community Strength Plan.”

Part 2. Program Management, Capability, and Capacity

2.1 Performance Management Plan, Outputs / Outcomes

Our Performance Management Plan is grounded in the principles of Program Management as defined by the Project Management Institute (PMI), which emphasizes the effective implementation of change through multiple projects to achieve distinct and measurable benefits. This plan will oversee the coordinated execution of various initiatives under our Pollution Reduction Strategy, ensuring that each project aligns with the overall goals of improving environmental quality and community resilience in Third Ward. Central to our approach is the establishment of a Community Benefits Agreement, which will guide our commitment to delivering tangible, equitable benefits to residents. The Project Charter, initiated by the Houston Housing Authority (HHA), will formalize this commitment and include a full-day in-person launch event in Third Ward. This event will bring together key stakeholders, including representatives from the EPA, HHA, the City of Houston’s Office of Recovery and Resilience, USDN Resilience Hubs, American Society of Adaptation Professionals (ASAP), and Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC), along with all key personnel. Through this structured and inclusive framework, our Performance Management Plan will ensure the

successful delivery of the program’s objectives while fostering accountability, transparency, and community engagement.

The outputs and outcomes shown below were selected based on a comprehensive assessment of environmental challenges in the Project Area, involving extensive and ongoing input from stakeholders and experts.

Table 1: Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs	Outcomes
Climate Action Strategy 1: Green Infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ At least 150,000 square feet of green space added in Third Ward, including 500 shade trees planted and the restoration of native plant habitats along the Columbia Tap Trail and Cuney Homes campus. Tracking time frame: quarterly based on progress reports from HHA and the City of Houston Office of Recovery and Resilience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increased green space as measured by the square footage of added greenspace. ➤ A reduction of 3°F in land surface temperatures on average annually in at least half of affected areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ At least 15 bioswales and 10 rain gardens incorporated into the streetscape design. These green infrastructure elements are expected to capture and filter 1.5 million gallons of stormwater runoff annually, significantly reducing the occurrence of flash flooding events. Tracking time frame: quarterly based on progress reports from HHA and the City of Houston Office of Recovery and Resilience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increased resilience to extreme weather and climate conditions as measured by the reduction in flash flooding events, improved groundwater recharge, and cooler ambient temperatures during heat waves.
Climate Action Strategy 5: Community Resilience Hubs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establishment of a network of Community Resilience Hubs at key locations—Cuney Homes Community Center, Third Ward Multi-Service Center, EEDC, SHAPE Center, and Civic Heart. Each site will be equipped with solar power and backup generators (Cuney Homes, Third Ward Multi-Service Center, and EEDC with both solar and generators; SHAPE Center and Civic Heart with solar only) along with essential emergency supplies and communication tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enhanced community resilience and preparedness for extreme weather events, as measured by the number of residents accessing community resilience hubs and the reduction in response times during emergencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Completed disaster response training at the SHAPE Center to equip Community Health Workers with skills in first aid, evacuation protocols, and resource coordination. Training will focus on outreach techniques to educate residents on preparedness, fostering a well-informed community capable of handling emergencies with greater resilience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increased community engagement and leadership in emergency response, as measured by the number of residents participating in preparedness training programs and the development of neighborhood-led emergency plans.

Outputs	Outcomes
Climate Action Strategy 8: Workforce Development Programs for Occupations that Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Air Pollutants	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ At least 125 individuals in disadvantaged communities will participate in workforce training. Tracking time frame: quarterly based on attendance records and surveys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increased literacy among community members about skills required to pursue green careers, as measured by the completion rate of workforce training programs and the number of certifications earned.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ At least 80% of trainees will graduate from their respective training programs (100 total). Tracking time frame: in real-time based on graduation records within the Salesforce database. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increased wages, benefits, job security, and career advancement for program graduates.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ At least 70% will be placed in careers and apprenticeships, with clear pathways for advancement within the industry within one year of graduation (88 total). Tracking time frame: one year after each cohort's graduation based on follow-up surveys. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improved economic outcomes for program graduates, as measured by increases in wages, job benefits, job security, and career advancement within one year of program completion.
Pollution Reduction Strategy 2: Outdoor Air Quality & Community Health Improvements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implementation of green infrastructure projects throughout Third Ward, including the planting of shade trees, development of bioswales, installation of rain gardens, and restoration of native plant habitats. These nature-based solutions will improve air quality by filtering pollutants, reduce stormwater runoff, and mitigate the urban heat island effect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improved air and water quality, as measured by reduced levels of PM2.5 and other pollutants, and enhanced stormwater management capacity through green infrastructure projects. ➤ Enhanced environmental resilience and reduced urban heat island effects, as measured by an increase in urban tree canopy coverage, installation of cooling infrastructure, and reductions in localized temperatures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Training of Community Health Workers at the SHAPE Center to address pollution-related health impacts, focusing on air quality issues and pollution reduction strategies. Training will include education on identifying pollution sources, mitigating indoor air quality hazards, and conducting community outreach to raise awareness about pollution's health effects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increased literacy among Community Health Workers on pollution impacts and response strategies, as measured by the number of workers trained and the frequency of community education and outreach sessions conducted.

Evaluation Activities

To ensure rigorous evaluation and effective documentation of our project's progress, we have integrated comprehensive program evaluation activities from the start. A dedicated staff member will be hired to support a third-party evaluator with extensive experience in environmental and community development programs. This evaluator will use both qualitative and quantitative measures to track the project's progress from initiation to completion.

Training for both Bullard Center Green Workforce Development Program trainees and SHAPE Center Community Health Workers will empower them to actively contribute to these evaluation efforts. Bullard Center trainees, along with workforce development graduates, will use advanced tools like air quality monitors and FLIR heat sensors to measure improvements in air quality and reductions in surface temperatures, particularly in areas with new green infrastructure. Key performance indicators (KPIs) will include increased green space, enhanced stormwater management, reduced ambient temperatures during heat waves, and improved community resilience. Baseline assessments will be established at the start, with periodic evaluations that include pre- and post-surveys to measure shifts in environmental awareness and resilience among Community Health Workers, trainees, and community members.

The third-party evaluator will produce detailed reports at regular intervals, documenting progress, identifying areas for improvement, and maintaining transparency and accountability. This structured evaluation will guide data-driven decisions and allow for course corrections to ensure project goals are met. Together, these efforts ensure that our Pollution Reduction Strategy remains actionable, measurable, and aligned with the evolving needs of the Third Ward community, fostering long-term sustainability.

2.2 Project Linkages to the EPA Strategic Plan

RISE Third Ward is a transformative effort aimed at ensuring that every resident of Houston's Third Ward has access to green spaces, meaningful careers, life-saving resources during environmental emergencies, and community resources that support their well-being. This initiative will transform vacant lots and underutilized spaces into vibrant parks filled with native plants and trees, improving air quality and fostering community pride. It also focuses on economic empowerment by training residents in green jobs, opening doors to stable, well-paying careers that contribute to a sustainable future.

During environmental emergencies, community resilience hubs will provide critical resources, supported by trained Community Health Workers who will ensure neighbors receive the help and information they need. These hubs will serve as vital centers for emergency response and community engagement, equipped with renewable energy and backup power sources.

Aligned with EPA Strategic Plan goals, RISE Third Ward addresses climate issues by enhancing stormwater management (Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water), improving air quality through increased tree canopy and reduced emissions (Goal 4: Clean Air), and promoting climate resilience by mitigating urban heat island effects and building local capacity to respond to environmental challenges (Goal 1: Tackle the Climate Crisis).

The Bullard Center, alongside trained residents, will use advanced tools to monitor progress. This initiative is about more than environmental change—it's about restoring dignity,

opportunity, and hope to Third Ward, creating a healthier, more resilient community where every resident can thrive.

2.3 CBO Experience and Commitment

Houston Housing Authority (HHA) – Lead Applicant:

As a long-standing community-based organization, the Houston Housing Authority (HHA) has served as a cornerstone of support for disadvantaged communities in Houston for over 80 years. HHA has a deep history of providing quality affordable housing and implementing community development initiatives designed to uplift underserved populations. Through programs such as the Choice Neighborhood Initiative and HUD Jobs Plus, HHA has directly addressed the needs of low-income families, including those residing in Third Ward.

HHA's commitment to Third Ward is reflected in its comprehensive efforts to foster sustainable, community-led development. As part of the Choice Neighborhood Initiative, HHA has actively engaged with residents of Cuney Homes to identify needs and co-develop solutions that prioritize affordable housing, workforce opportunities, and environmental resilience. HHA's relationships with local stakeholders, including neighborhood leaders, faith-based organizations, and educational institutions, underscore its longstanding commitment to building trust and delivering meaningful outcomes for disadvantaged communities.

Friends of Columbia Tap (FOCT) – Statutory Partner:

Friends of Columbia Tap (FOCT) is a grassroots organization dedicated to advancing environmental sustainability and equitable development in historically underserved communities. FOCT's work is deeply rooted in Third Ward, where it has developed and implemented transformative projects such as the Columbia Tap Action Plan. This initiative has involved extensive collaboration with local residents to improve the Columbia Tap Trail through tree plantings, pocket park creation, interpretive signage, and other community-driven enhancements.

FOCT's commitment to Third Ward is evident in its approach to community engagement, which prioritizes inclusion, education, and empowerment. The organization has built strong, trusting relationships with residents through consistent dialogue, workshops, and collaborative decision-making processes. By addressing critical community needs such as mobility, green infrastructure, and access to safe recreational spaces, FOCT ensures that its projects not only reflect the values and priorities of the community but also deliver tangible benefits to the most disadvantaged populations.

2.4 Programmatic and Managerial Capability and Resources

Houston Housing Authority (HHA) – Lead Applicant

HHA has extensive organizational experience and capacity to manage complex projects, particularly those involving federal funding and community development initiatives. With over 80 years of service, HHA has successfully completed major projects, including the HUD Choice Neighborhoods Planning and Implementation Grants, and EPA Brownfields projects, among

others. HHA's staff includes experienced project managers, financial officers, and technical specialists who oversee every phase of project execution. Their expertise ensures adherence to timelines, budgets, and reporting requirements. HHA's robust internal controls, including comprehensive financial management systems, ensure taxpayer dollars are managed ethically and efficiently. HHA has policies and procedures in place to prevent and address waste, fraud, and abuse, including confidential reporting mechanisms and risk management strategies.

HHA's financial stability is demonstrated by its successful management of multi-million-dollar grants, which require stringent oversight and compliance. Through regular audits and transparent reporting, HHA ensures accountability and builds trust with funding agencies. This capacity extends to managing overlapping projects, as evidenced by the concurrent execution of multiple federal and state-funded initiatives.

Friends of Columbia Tap (FOCT) – Statutory Partner

FOCT is a Texas-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with significant experience in managing community-driven environmental and infrastructure projects. Its operational structure includes both a Board of Directors, which oversees governance and strategic planning, and a Community Council, which ensures that projects align with the needs and priorities of local residents. FOCT has successfully executed high-impact initiatives such as the Columbia Tap Action Plan Implementation, which included tree plantings, pocket park creation, bioswales, pollinator gardens, interpretive and wayfinding signage, water fountain installation, and the development of housing and economic opportunity plans. FOCT is also managing \$7.5 million in funding from the Houston-Galveston Area Council for solar lighting, trail safety improvements, and connectivity enhancements, including a new shared-use path linking the Columbia Tap Trail to Hermann Park.

FOCT's governance framework supports financial and risk management through its Board and Treasurer, ensuring ethical and efficient use of resources. Financial stability and accountability are hallmarks of its operations, with robust policies in place to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. FOCT's commitment to transparency is demonstrated through its regular recordkeeping and reporting processes, as well as its policies for confidential reporting and whistleblower protections.

Milestone Schedule for Implementation of Strategies and Program Integration

RISE Third Ward is deeply rooted in the rich history and culture of Houston's Third Ward. The Program Charter, which will be launched with a keynote address by Naomi Carrier, Founder and Executive Director of the Texas Center for African American Living History, serves as a foundational document uniting stakeholders around a shared vision that honors the community's cultural legacy. The implementation of climate action and pollution reduction strategies will integrate with Project Management Institute (PMI) phases and align with the EPA Strategic Plan, ensuring an integrated response to the climate emergency. Program integration will prioritize the development of Resilience Hubs, following a critical path to meet the community's needs, informed by the National Heat Strategy 2024-2030 and an all-hazards, data-driven approach to prioritize milestones.

Year 1: Planning and Initial Implementation

Q1 (Months 1-3): Finalize project plans, engage stakeholders, and begin baseline data collection. Launch initial workforce training programs and recruit participants.

Q2 (Months 4-6): Start tree planting, habitat restoration, and bioswale installation. Conduct the first project review and make adjustments. Continue workforce training and monitor initial impacts.

Q3 (Months 7-9): Continue green infrastructure projects. Expand workforce training programs.

Q4 (Months 10-12): Review progress and make necessary adjustments.

Year 2: Full Implementation and Expansion

Q5 (Months 13-15): Expand workforce training programs and participant enrollment. Continue planting and begin green roof and wall installations.

Q6 (Months 16-18): Complete additional bioswale installations and expand green infrastructure. Start establishing Community Resilience Hubs.

Q7 (Months 19-21): Maintain and monitor green infrastructure projects. Continue workforce development and refine based on feedback.

Q8 (Months 22-24): Complete Community Resilience Hubs and conduct readiness training for Community Health Workers.

Year 3: Evaluation and Sustainability

Q9 (Months 25-27): Maintain and monitor all projects. Begin comprehensive impact evaluation and data collection.

Q10 (Months 28-30): Complete impact evaluation, compile reports, and hold community meetings for feedback.

Q11 (Months 31-33): Gather feedback, refine strategies, and develop sustainability plans.

Q12 (Months 34-36): Finalize project activities, ensure sustainability, and celebrate achievements with the community.

Financial Management and Oversight

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA) and Friends of Columbia Tap (FOCT) exemplify strong financial stability, rigorous internal controls, and a robust capacity to manage taxpayer dollars ethically and efficiently. HHA and FOCT have successfully managed large-scale federal grants, demonstrating prudent fiscal management and diversified funding sources, including the \$50 million Choice Neighborhood implementation project. Their financial oversight includes regular internal audits, comprehensive financial reporting, and adherence to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), managed by a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and supported by advanced accounting software. HHA has also established a detailed project management framework with performance metrics and regular progress evaluations, overseen by a dedicated Compliance Officer and a Risk Management Committee. To prevent waste, fraud, and abuse, HHA has implemented a robust Whistleblower Protection Policy and an anonymous reporting system, ensuring transparency, accountability, and trust with stakeholders and the community.

2.5 Past Performance

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA) has a strong history of managing large-scale federal projects, demonstrating exceptional capacity to complete transformative initiatives successfully:

- **HUD Choice Neighborhood Planning and Implementation Grants (\$450,000 Planning Grant, \$50 million Implementation Grant):** HHA successfully completed the \$450,000 planning grant, which established the strategic framework for the redevelopment of Cuney Homes and the surrounding Third Ward. This planning phase facilitated community engagement, created partnerships, and developed a comprehensive vision for neighborhood transformation. Building on this foundation, HHA is currently managing the \$50 million implementation grant, which focuses on constructing affordable housing, integrating green infrastructure, and enhancing public spaces. Reporting requirements are consistently met, with progress documented through detailed updates and measurable outcomes.
- **EPA Brownfields Assistance Grant (\$3.5 million):** HHA managed this grant to remediate over 25 acres of contaminated land, converting these areas into safe, usable community spaces. The project involved rigorous environmental compliance, transparent progress tracking, and adherence to federal reporting standards, ensuring successful execution and community benefit.
- **HUD Jobs Plus Initiative Grant (\$2.3 million):** This workforce development program provided job training and placement services for public housing residents, achieving a 40% increase in employment rates among participants. Progress was tracked through certifications earned, income growth, and employment outcomes, demonstrating the program's impact and long-term success.

Friends of Columbia Tap (FOCT) has a proven record of implementing impactful environmental and infrastructure projects that enhance community and environmental resilience:

- **Columbia Tap Action Plan Implementation (\$350,000 completed, \$7.5 million ongoing):** FOCT has already completed \$350,000 in improvements funded by Rotary, Verizon, and other donors, which included tree plantings, the creation of pocket parks, native pollinator gardens, interpretive and wayfinding signage, water fountain installation, bioswale creation, community engagement efforts, trainings, workshops, and charrettes. Additionally, FOCT developed a comprehensive Action Plan and a Housing and Economic Opportunity Plan. Currently, FOCT is working with two local management districts to oversee \$7.5 million in funding from the Houston-Galveston Area Council. This ongoing work includes installing solar lighting, making safety improvements, upgrading intersections, and enhancing trail connectivity. A significant feature of this project is the construction of a new shared-use path linking the Columbia Tap Trail to Hermann Park, further expanding accessibility and community connectivity.
- **Evolve Houston eMobility Microgrant Initiative (\$15,000):** FOCT successfully implemented the Evolve Houston eMobility Microgrant Initiative, completing all activities on time and within budget. The project included renovating a storage space, purchasing e-trikes, helmets, and spare parts, conducting two workforce training sessions, and organizing weekly community rides to promote e-mobility and hands-on

learning. The initiative achieved its goals, enhancing workforce skills and increasing community engagement with sustainable transportation options.

- **Jacob and Terese Hershey Foundation Latitude Fund Grant (\$7,500):** FOCT utilized this grant for capacity building and to support a Self-Care Steering Committee Retreat. This initiative strengthened organizational capacity and enhanced FOCT's ability to execute strategic projects effectively.

Together, HHA and FOCT bring a wealth of experience in managing federally and donor-funded projects, delivering measurable outcomes, and building long-term community resilience. Their combined expertise ensures the successful implementation of the RISE Third Ward initiative.

Part 3. Readiness to Perform, Feasibility, and Sustainability

3.1 Readiness Approach

See Attachment G: "Readiness Approach".

3.2 Feasibility

The RISE Third Ward initiative is designed to ensure that all strategies and associated projects can be successfully and effectively completed within the three-year grant period. Each component of the initiative is structured with clear timelines, achievable milestones, and established best practices to minimize risks and ensure timely delivery.

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA) and Friends of Columbia Tap (FOCT) bring extensive experience managing large-scale, multi-year projects, ensuring that the initiative's goals are realistic and attainable. HHA has a proven track record of managing complex federal projects, including the HUD Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant, where it successfully coordinated housing development and infrastructure improvements under strict timelines. FOCT has similarly demonstrated success with projects such as the Columbia Tap Action Plan Implementation, completing infrastructure and community engagement initiatives on schedule and within budget.

The initiative's strategies have been designed to complement each other, reducing overlap and ensuring streamlined execution. For example, workforce training programs are scheduled to align with the rollout of green infrastructure projects, enabling trainees to immediately apply their skills while advancing broader project goals. Similarly, community resilience hubs will be operational in phases, ensuring that each is fully functional before the next is developed.

Risks to timely completion are minimal due to the detailed planning and organizational capacity of both partners. Contingency measures are in place to address potential challenges, including adjustments to project timelines and reallocation of resources as needed. Regular progress tracking and reporting will ensure accountability and allow for prompt resolution of any issues that arise.

Collectively, the initiative's strategies and projects have been thoroughly vetted for feasibility and align with the expertise of HHA and FOCT, ensuring that the RISE Third Ward initiative can be fully executed within the three-year performance period.

3.3 Sustainability

The Houston Housing Authority (HHA) and Friends of Columbia Tap (FOCT) are committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the RISE Third Ward initiative. Through strategic partnerships and demonstrated resources, they have established a robust framework to maintain and expand the benefits of the proposed projects well beyond the three-year grant period.

HHA has proven its capacity to leverage significant support through its Choice Neighborhood Initiative, securing \$538.5 million in commitments from community-based partners and anchor institutions. These commitments reflect a broad coalition of public and private stakeholders invested in revitalizing Third Ward. This funding will be directed toward affordable housing, infrastructure improvements, and community resources, providing a strong foundation for the sustainability of the RISE Third Ward initiative. HHA has also secured commitments from its leadership and from the City of Houston's Planning and Housing and Community Development Departments, ensuring continued technical and financial support to sustain and expand project impacts.

FOCT has similarly demonstrated its ability to establish key partnerships that ensure long-term sustainability. An interlocal agreement between the Houston Southeast and East Downtown Management Districts ensures ongoing maintenance of the Columbia Tap Trail, including enhancements such as solar lighting, stormwater management systems, and expanded connectivity. These efforts, supported by FOCT's collaboration with the City's Public Works and Parks and Recreation Departments, ensure that the trail remains a vital resource for the community.

The City of Houston's Office of Recovery and Resilience has also committed its support to the RISE Third Ward initiative, aligning the project with broader resilience and recovery goals. This partnership provides technical expertise and operational support, ensuring the continued functionality and impact of infrastructure and programmatic outcomes.

With extensive commitments from community-based partners, anchor institutions, and public agencies, the RISE Third Ward initiative is well-positioned to deliver sustainable, long-term benefits for the Third Ward community, extending well beyond the grant's three-year performance period. These partnerships ensure the resources, funding, and oversight needed to maintain and grow the initiative's impacts for years to come.

3.4 Program Budget Description

Category	Description	Total
Personnel	Covers the salaries of employees directly involved in program implementation. This includes roles such as Program Directors, Managers, Coordinators for EPA compliance and procurement, Construction Project Coordinators, and Environmental Justice Task Force Personnel.	\$2,512,500
Fringe Benefits	Includes additional compensation beyond regular salaries, such as social security, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, retirement contributions, health insurance, and paid leave. The fringe benefits rate is set at 30%.	\$753,750
Travel	Accounts for essential travel costs for program-related activities, including site visits, participation in resilience hub assessments, and attendance at the Greenbuild Expo. Covers expenses like mileage, airfare, hotel, per diem, and rental cars.	\$34,854
Equipment	Encompasses all equipment purchases over \$5,000 necessary for program operation, including natural gas generators, solar panel packages, building automation systems, green infrastructure, and workforce training materials.	\$4,283,300
Supplies	Refers to all tangible items aside from equipment, such as laptops, first aid kits, 2-way radios, signage, printed materials, and postage.	\$278,000
Contractual	Encompasses fees for consulting services in areas such as architectural design, climate resilience, emergency planning, electrical and mechanical consulting, urban forestry, and more, alongside translation and permitting services.	\$2,709,000
Construction	Includes expenses for all construction and property improvements, such as installation of generators and solar panels, landscaping with native plants, building and land remediation, and code upgrades.	\$4,381,100
Other (separate by category; consider the exclusions within each category in the NOFO)	Comprises direct costs not included in the other categories, like participant support costs, community engagement efforts, and subawards to collaborating entities. Includes rental expenses for necessary equipment and maintenance contracts.	\$4,301,625
Total Direct Costs	Sum of above categories.	\$19,254,129
Indirect Costs	Includes costs that benefit more than one cost objective and do not fit with any of the specific cost objectives or projects as a direct cost. Indirect costs do not exceed more than 20% of the total award amount.	\$745,870
Total Project Costs	Sum of direct and indirect costs.	\$20,000,000

The proposed budget for the RISE Third Ward initiative is structured to prioritize the delivery of benefits to disadvantaged communities, ensuring resources are allocated effectively to maximize impact. Personnel expenses (\$2,512,500) and fringe benefits (\$753,750) support the essential staff needed to oversee and implement projects that directly improve community resilience and sustainability. Equipment (\$4,283,300) and construction costs (\$4,381,100) fund critical infrastructure, such as solar panels, generators, and stormwater management systems, which will enhance living conditions in underserved areas. Supplies (\$278,000) and contractual services (\$2,709,000) provide operational tools and technical expertise to ensure high-quality project delivery. The “Other” category (\$4,301,625) supports community engagement, participant assistance, and subawards, directly benefiting residents through targeted initiatives.

Travel expenses (\$34,854), including site visits and participation in the Greenbuild Expo, are essential for monitoring project progress and integrating innovative sustainability practices to further benefit the community. With over 96% of the budget allocated to direct costs, and indirect costs (\$745,870) capped at 20%, the initiative emphasizes the efficient use of funds to create lasting benefits for disadvantaged communities while maintaining fiscal responsibility. This budget ensures that the projects are implemented effectively within the three-year grant period, with a focus on equity and impactful outcomes.

3.5 Compliance Plan

See Attachment H: “Compliance Plan.”