

CBA Working Group Issues Report, Recommendations for Community Benefits Agreement between the City of Houston and Rice University

Direct community investments, project-based opportunities, and accountability are at the heart of the CBA Working Group recommendations that will ensure underrepresented Houstonians are provided with an opportunity to benefit from the development of the Ion District.

HOUSTON, MAY 19, 2021 - The Ion and Ion District, the 16-acre development located in Midtown will be a transformational mixed-use project that seeks to strengthen Houston's economic resilience and build community, in particular disadvantaged communities that have not had access to economic opportunities in the technology, innovation and tech-enabled industries.

"When we first thought about the Ion and the District, we envisioned a welcoming place where everyone can find the right opportunity for themselves. A place where youth, adults, universities, small and big business expand their knowledge, increase their skills, adding to their income and/or simply learn and engage," stated Ryan M. LeVasseur, Managing Director, Direct Real Estate for RMC. "And, I'm proud to say, we've begun that process through research, collaboration and community engagement."

In November 2020, RMC invited a group of community stakeholders to assist RMC in identifying a set of commitments that can be documented in a signed Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with the City of Houston. The group of 13 stakeholders, known as the CBA Working Group, represents respected community, business, and civic leaders along with residents who have provided a framework for both a city-wide and local neighborhood perspective. Those individuals are:

Errol Allen II, Alpha Merit Group Educational Foundation (AMGEF) and Houston Black Leadership Institute (HBLI)

Paul D. Charles,
Neighborhood Recovery Community Development Corporation

Carol Guess,
Greater Houston Black Chamber

Jason Hyman,
Realinc, Office of Jason T, Hyman

Paula Mendoza,
Possible Missions / Houston Minority Supplier Diversity Council Board Member

Dr. Laura Murillo,
Houston Hispanic Chamber

Mike Pittman,
UpCDC / East End Makers Hub

Dr. Rudy Rasmus,
St. John's UMC / Temenos / Bread of Life

Helen Stagg,
Change Happens

Laurie Vignaud,
Unity National Bank

Jay Vinekar,
Midtown Super Neighborhood #62

Lindsey Williams,
City of Houston

Susan Young,
South Main Alliance

“The direction of the CBA Working Group was clear, take all of your experiences as a Houstonian, subject-matter expertise and envision specific commitments that will offer long-term benefits to not only Midtown and the immediate adjacent communities, rather for all of Houston and in particular Houston’s most vulnerable community,” said Carol Guess, President of the Greater Houston Black Chamber (GHBC).

From the six-part working group process key recommendations emerged from the areas that RMC identified as pivotal to the development and community inclusive of: economic opportunity, housing opportunity, and inclusive hiring & contracting. The report provides specific and measurable commitments that the CBA Working Group is asking both RMC and the City of Houston to consider and incorporate into the final document. Among the 21 commitments are recommendations that target job creation, support small business and entrepreneurship, preserve and accelerate affordable housing in the Third Ward and capacity building among local MWBE contractors and vendors.

The CBA Working Group Final Report represents a consensus on commitments and the accountability structure for the CBA inclusive of RMC producing and publishing an annual “Community Investment Report” and the establishment of a “Community Accountability Committee.”

“We are grateful to the community members who participated in the CBA Working Group, volunteering countless hours to help develop recommendations for meaningful commitments.

The recommendations in the CBA Working Group Report will provide a foundation for RMC's commitments as we negotiate the final terms of a CBA with the City of Houston.,” stated Samuel Dike, Manager of Strategic Initiatives for RMC.

Read the full report at houinnovate.com/engagements/.

The process will continue with RMC and the City of Houston negotiating the final terms of the agreement. The final CBA terms will ultimately be presented to Houston City Council and if approved, will be a legally binding contract.

For more information on the CBA Working Group process that is guiding the development of a Community Benefits Agreement between the City of Houston and Rice University visit HOUInnovate.com online.

About Rice Management Company:

Rice Management Company, (RMC), is responsible for stewardship of Rice University's endowment, and was established to provide a perpetual source of revenue for current operations and certain capital needs. Rice University serves its mission by cultivating a diverse community of learning and discovery that produces leaders across the spectrum of human endeavor. RMC's teams bring decades of investment management expertise across diversified industries and financial specialties. The Direct Real Estate team is responsible for investments in strategic development opportunities in Houston. One example is the development of The Ion, a groundbreaking, mixed-use space that will benefit the community, and the surrounding 16-acre district. The area will become an inclusive, dynamic and vibrant hub that attracts and retains innovative talent. For more information, please visit <https://ionhouston.com/> or <https://investments.rice.edu/>.

Press Contact

Ann Taylor
treasint2@rice.edu
281-702-3111