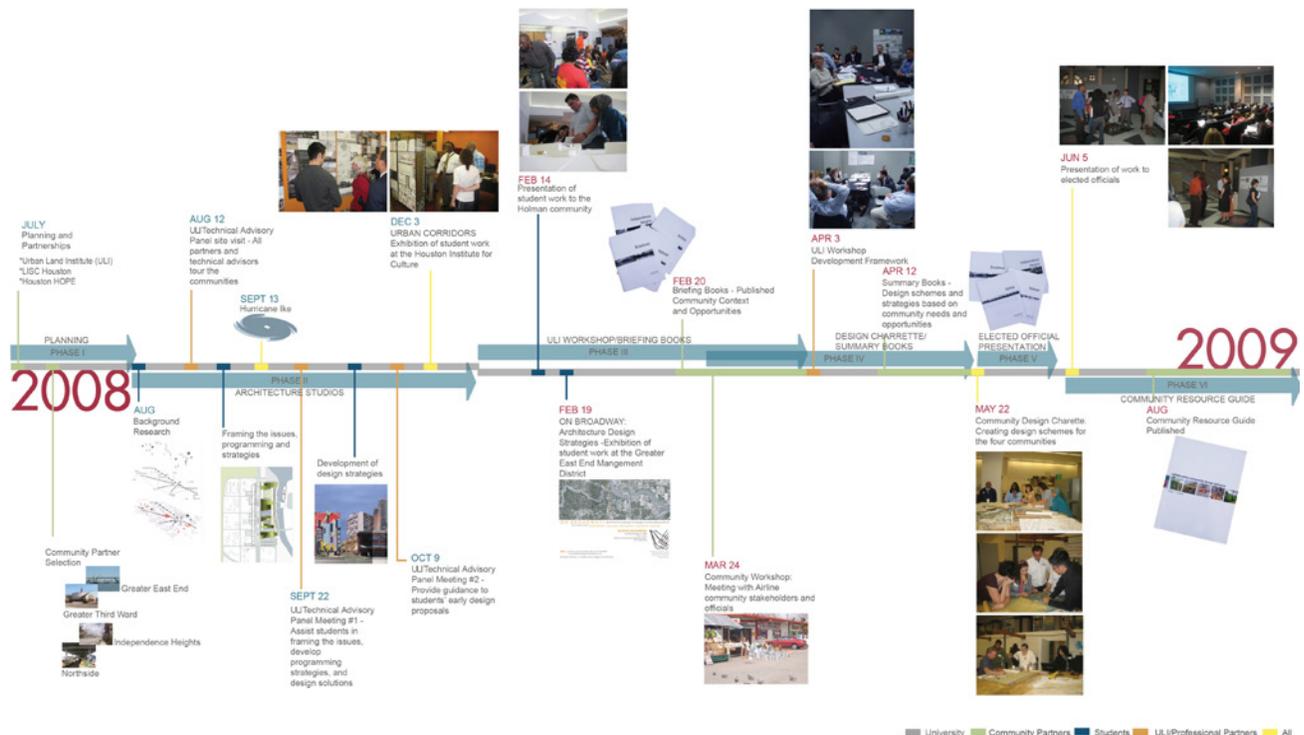


# Collaborative Community Design Initiative

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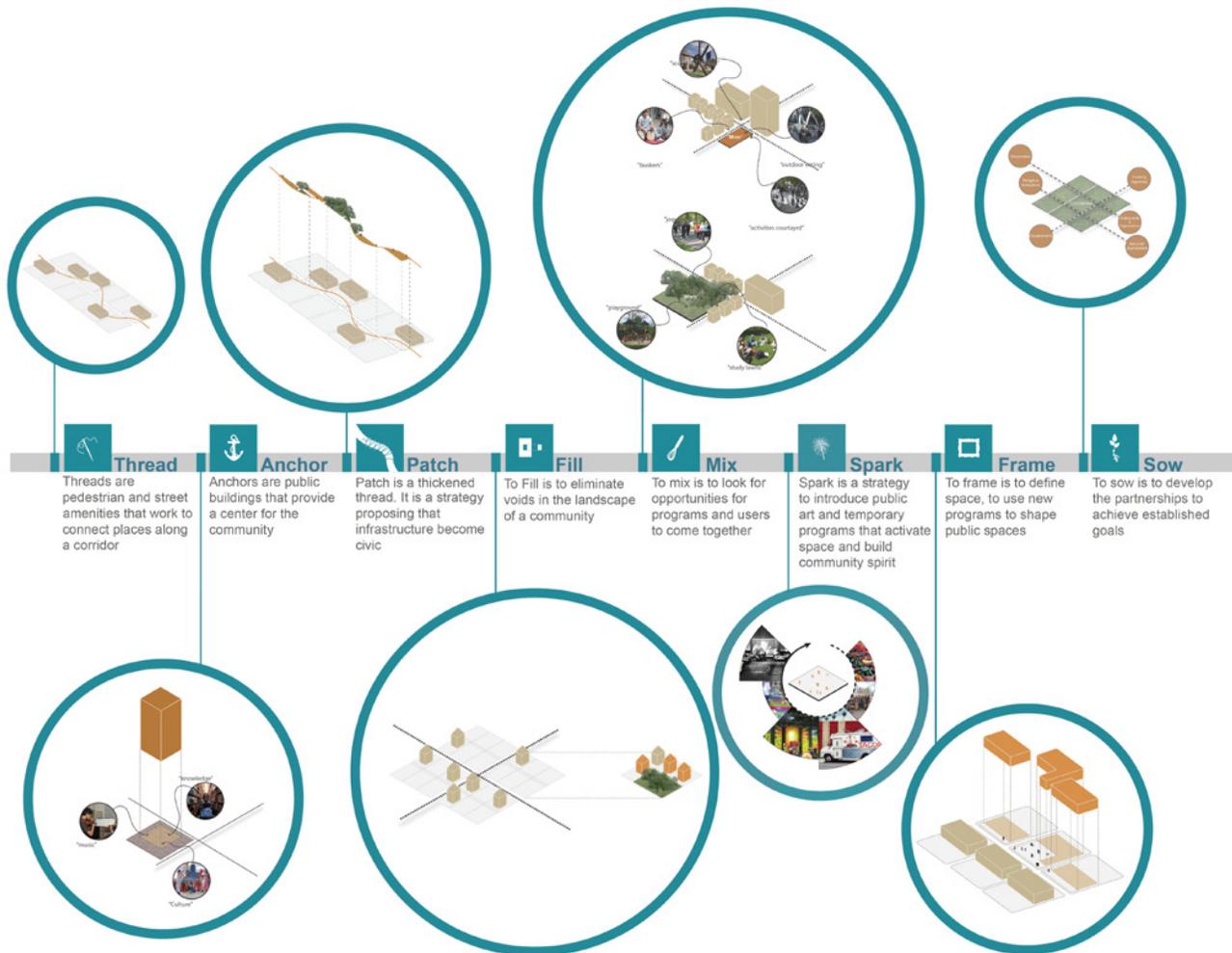


One Year 25 Architecture Students 100 Community stakeholders  
48 design, development and financing professionals 12,000 Hours 1.5 full-time employees for each Community Partner

## INTRODUCTION

The Collaborative Community Design Initiative (CCDI) is a program of the University of Houston's Community Design Resource Center that builds

partnerships between underserved communities, professionals in the fields of design, planning, real estate, and community development, and faculty and students. Working across different scales and issues—ranging from ecology, to economics, to the



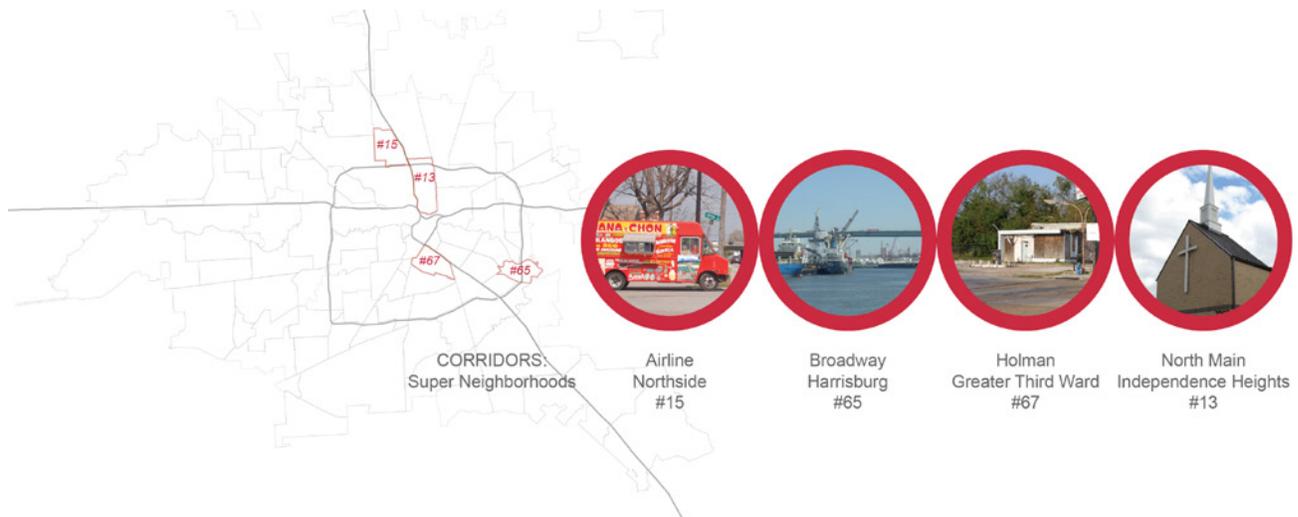
arts and culture—the goal of the program is to collaboratively generate design strategies that build on existing resources.

Houston is the laboratory for the Initiative, a city characterized by its lack of zoning and comprehensive planning. This reality places particular stress on the least affluent neighborhoods, where the sort of property-owner initiated deed restrictions that moderate development in other parts of the city, are virtually impossible to implement. Four of Houston's most stressed neighborhoods—two predominantly African-American and two predominantly Hispanic—were selected for the pilot version of the Initiative, which focused on once-thriving commercial corridors. CCDI will continue selecting four additional neighborhoods each year, framed around a topic, until we have partnered with organizations representing all of Houston's 88 official super-neighborhoods.

In 2008-2009 twenty-five architecture students participated by working directly with our community partners. Four-dozen architecture, design, planning, development, and financing professionals shared their expertise at two workshops. And over one hundred community leaders and stakeholders brought their visions and passions to all aspects of the program.

The INITIATIVE identified a set of eight strategies for community change: Thread, Anchor, Patch, Fill, Mix, Spark, Frame, Sow. The strategies, while developed with our partner communities, have broader application to similar communities throughout the city.

Specific recommendations were also developed for each of our study areas: the Airline Corridor in the Northside; the Broadway Corridor in Harrisburg; the Holman Corridor in the Greater Third Ward; and the North Main Corridor in Independence Heights.



Community partners take away from the yearlong program a Briefing Book that documents and analyzes the neighborhood, a Summary Book of visions for a more sustainable and economically viable future, and invaluable opportunities to present their visions to elected officials at every level of government, resource teams, and funders.

A summary of the findings for each of our partner communities follows.

### AIRLINE

The Airline Corridor is on the north side of Houston, just inside the North 610 Loop. The area is home to Canino's Market, one of the largest produce markets in the city, and dozens of other small businesses and entrepreneurs. There are no parks, ATMs, public restrooms or general public parking in the corridor. The closest sizable park is more than a mile away. The public realm is virtually absent, where sidewalks do exist they are extremely narrow, interrupted frequently with driveways, loading docks, and parked cars.

The strategies identified for the Airline Corridor focus on merging public works expenditures, in this case street widening, with public amenities. Specifically, the primary goal was to illustrate how all of the destinations along the corridor could be linked with threads, and that the civic infrastructure of the site could be enhanced by carving out public pockets from parking areas and other leftover spaces created in the wake of the street widening, creating places to play, sit, gather, eat and linger

while reinforcing the informal qualities of the site that make it a "magical place."

### BROADWAY

The Broadway Corridor is located in Houston's East End, at the convergence of Buffalo and Brays Bayous. The Corridor was once the "Main Street" of the old town of Harrisburg, a city established prior to Houston. Over the decades the Corridor has quietly eroded, losing much of its built fabric, its residents, its businesses and its liveliness. In the 1920s the Broadway Corridor was home to just under 14,000 people, accounting for more than 10% of Houston's growing population, today the area is home to less than a third as many people—4,000—and currently accounts for 0.2% of Houston's population. The primary question for the corridor is not how to recreate it, a process that would be fundamentally nostalgic, but how to re-invent it by building on the unique views of the city and port, capitalizing on the investments along the bayous, and opening up the industrial waterfront for public and recreational uses.

The strategies for the Corridor focus on parks, open spaces, housing, and public programs, organized along the bayous, with the potential to draw visitors to the site for leisure and play as well as spark economic development in the corridor.

### HOLMAN

The Holman Corridor is on the eastern edge of Houston's Third Ward, an important center of African-American life and history. While the Corridor



was once lined with small shops and stores that served the surrounding neighborhood, today the area is fundamentally defined by what is missing rather than what is there. There are no grocery stores, full-service banks, dry cleaners, movie theaters, or pharmacies and there are few places to eat or gather. Over the last seventy years disinvestment and abandonment have wreaked havoc on the neighborhood and both the adjacent institutions, the University of Houston and Texas Southern University, have expanded their campuses, gobbling up sizeable pieces of the neighborhood as

they have grown. The original pattern of small, urban blocks has been eroded and much of the fabric subsumed in the super-blocks of the bordering institutions. In the next five years two new light rail lines will be constructed that will connect the site to major activity centers throughout Houston.

The strategies identified for the Holman Corridor centered on mixing programs for housing, civic spaces, and economic development as a way to provide amenities and gathering places for the diverse user groups and to build strong partnerships between the two universities, churches, non-profit organizations, and other entities to envision and implement a future that benefits all constituencies.

### **NORTH MAIN**

The North Main Corridor is located in Independence Heights, on the north side of Houston, just outside of Loop 610. Independence Heights has a rich history and strong community identity, the power of its people is its most significant asset. Affordable land, relative to the cost of property in surrounding neighborhoods, and strong partnerships create opportunities for new investments in affordable housing, public amenities, and economic development. At the same time, vacant lots, underutilized parking, and other opportunity sites could be redeveloped and re-purposed for community programs.

The strategies for the Corridor work to build on the strong history and culture in the neighborhood by focusing on innovative infill housing, creating social and civic anchors in the community, and promoting the economic independence of the neighborhood.

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