

JACKSONVILLE  
FLORIDA

NEW TOWN  
**Success Zone**

.....  
FIVE YEAR REPORT  
TO THE COMMUNITY  
.....

SPRING 2012

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

On behalf of the New Town Success Zone leadership team, we are proud to present this five-year report to the community and the Zone's many friends and supporters. We feel privileged to have participated in this landmark effort to empower families in one of Jacksonville's most at-risk communities, and we are heartened to see what a difference is being made with the engagement of the community and the help of so many of you.

While there have been many challenges since the inception of the program, including a severe recession and its aftershocks, we have a lot to be proud of!

FCAT scores at the Zone's elementary school, S.P. Livingston Elementary, have risen dramatically; the school now boasts a B grade – up from an F in the 2008-09 school year. In addition, 92 percent of students have been promoted since NTSZ's inception, and absentee rates have dropped significantly. Perhaps most importantly, the level of parental involvement in the New Town schools continues to increase.

That is crucial, because one of the most important determiners of a child's future success is the involvement of their parents. That's why the NTSZ works not just to support kids in the Zone, but also to provide parents with information and skills that will help them better provide for their families and nurture their children's success.

As residents have taken a more active role in the community, the crime rate in the Zone has dropped and productive, collaborative relationships have been formed between


neighbors and with local law enforcement. Recent statistics are showing reduced crime rates, and a 50% decrease in arrests since the Zone was created.

One of the most inspiring chapters of the New Town story is about community partnerships. Numerous organizations have worked to make a difference for families in the neighborhood, with inspiring results. The increase in after-school programs provided through partners such as Boys & Girls Clubs – and the impending addition of a state-of-the-art park and playground, Success Park – have given residents peace of mind by providing safe places for their children to grow, learn and play even when they're not in school. These are just a few instances of the generous outpouring of support and participation from organizations throughout the community.

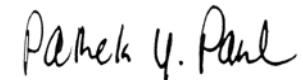
We are proud of how far the Zone has come in the last five years, but there is still plenty of work to do. With the assistance of our generous partners and supporters as well as an engaged community, we are confident we can get the job done.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Glover



Pamela Y. Paul



# WHAT IS NEW TOWN SUCCESS ZONE?

New Town Success Zone (NTSZ) is a partnership of public and private organizations that is developing a continuum of services to children and their families living in Jacksonville's New Town neighborhood. Through a variety of efforts – and in collaboration with parents, grandparents and other caregivers – the partnership seeks to provide healthy physical, mental and psychological development, enhance academic success and increase the overall well-being of the neighborhood's children.

NTSZ's mission is to provide a place-based continuum of services from prenatal and well-baby care to college or post secondary training for children and their families living in the neighborhood. The shared vision of the Zone's leadership – neighborhood residents, parents and teachers, working committee members, partners and the City of Jacksonville – is as follows:



Map of New Town Success Zone Area



## HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

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In April 2007, former Jacksonville mayor John Peyton, members of the Jacksonville Children's Commission and other community leaders traveled to New York to learn more about the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ). A "multi-year comprehensive community building initiative," the HCZ Project helps create a safe learning environment for youth residing in a 100-block area of Central Harlem. The Project's Complementary Learning System is designed to support families and enhance children's intellectual, emotional, and physical growth from the time they are conceived until they complete college and/or enter the workforce.

Using information gathered about the HCZ Project, the City of Jacksonville and the Jacksonville Children's Commission began working to create a similar program locally. It was clear that the \$60-plus million-a-year program couldn't be replicated exactly in a municipality already struggling with budget challenges. However, local advocates envisioned using all available resources from community organizations to form a partnership that could be replicated in Jacksonville.

Their goal was to support local families in their efforts to raise healthy, safe, educated children who would become contributing members of the community. In spite of challenges – including the fallout from a global recession – the project moved forward and the steering committee considered various neighborhoods on which to focus their effort and attention.

In February 2008, the New Town/Grand Park area was selected as the location for what would become the New Town Success Zone (NTSZ). Nat Glover, president of Edward Waters College and former sheriff of Duval County, and Pam

Paul, well-known community activist and philanthropist, agreed to serve as co-chairs of the leadership group.

From the very beginning, input from residents has been essential in determining what programs and services are most beneficial to families. Monthly community meetings, door to door meetings and questionnaires have helped to create a real partnership between NTSZ partners and the people they serve.

Five years after the initial "what-if?" trip to New York and the Harlem Children's Zone, New Town Success Zone is thriving. The organization, now headquartered at Edward Waters College, is lean and non-bureaucratic; its budget consists of only one salary.

The partners are creating synergy with one another on behalf of the neighborhood. Crime is down, academic achievement is up, and residents are becoming more engaged every month.



# Stories of New Town

## THE BIRTH OF AN IDEA

From the beginning, recalls Linda Lanier, former executive director of the Jacksonville Children's Commission, the New Town Success Zone seemed destined to happen. For starters, the idea seems to have occurred to a number of people at once. "I'm not sure exactly who first suggested we go to New York, but before we knew it, a whole group of us were on a plane," she said.

The makeup of the delegation from Jacksonville was another good sign. "This was a group of influential people who took time from very busy schedules and went to New York on behalf of our community at their own expense," she enthused. "There was such energy and interest around the whole thing!"

After a day of visiting the HCZ and hearing from its inspirational leader, Jeffrey Canada, the group was even more enthusiastic about the project, but less so about its chances of being replicated in Florida. Lacking the resources of the many well-endowed foundations headquartered in New York – and with a city government already struggling to fund its priorities – it was clear that Jacksonville couldn't literally follow the \$60-plus-million-a-year Harlem model. Nonetheless, hopes were high that something could be done.

Then came the Great Recession. "By the time we were actively planning," Lanier remembers, "it wasn't just budget season, but the economy was beginning to come down around our ears. It seemed like the project might be finished before it got started."

With leadership from former Duval County sheriff Nat Glover, now president of Edward Waters College, NTSZ got back on track. "Nat made our group realize that all of the things they were doing in Harlem, we already had in Jacksonville," she recalls. "So our challenge wasn't really what to do, it was how to put it together. And he basically went around the room of nonprofit leaders...He'd point to someone and say 'Well, you may not have any new money, but you have money, and you're already doing this work. So why don't we just figure out how to coordinate all of it in one neighborhood?' That's been the theme of the work ever since!"

After five-plus years, Lanier still believes the project was meant to be. "From the beginning," she concluded, "it far exceeded my expectations; and it continues to do so. Every time I go to a neighborhood meeting I can't believe what I hear! And the best part is that it is a true community partnership that has created a replicable model. That is an inspiration to me and I'm so honored to have been a part of this effort. "

**Linda Lanier, Community Volunteer**



## GETTING OFF THE GROUND

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After visiting the Harlem Children's Zone, the Duval County working group spent a great deal of time in planning, discussion and study – including conducting a needs assessment for eight candidate neighborhoods. Following tours, neighborhood meetings and review of the data collected, the New Town/ College Gardens area on Jacksonville's Northside was chosen as the site for Jacksonville's homegrown version of the Harlem Children's Zone in early 2008.

Once the location was selected, a series of community meetings were held with neighborhood residents and leaders, including the principals of S.P. Livingston Elementary and Eugene Butler Middle schools, to engage the community and learn more about its needs. At the meetings and during the course of door to door canvassing, the most frequently-identified needs were after-school activities for children; jobs for teens and adults; and improved safety, including better relationships with law enforcement.



The steering committee also sponsored a formal naming contest, engaging students from S.P. Livingston, Butler and Grand Park Center. The winning designation – New Town Success Zone – reflected the committee's intention to begin the work in the eastern portion of the neighborhood.

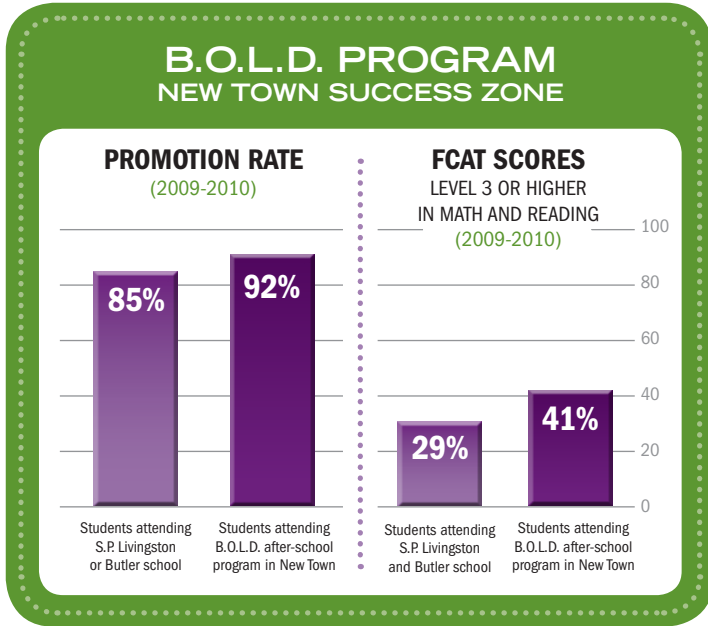
Five years into the project, the needs identified by residents are being addressed and progress has been made on all fronts. The Steering Committee and neighborhood leaders have evolved into one committee to oversee and assist with the Zone. Their work is organized into four sub-committees: Early Childhood; Public Education and Positive Youth Development; Health Care, and Neighborhood Safety and Stability. And public and private organizations partnering with the project are collaborating on behalf of the neighborhood in new and productive ways, generating additional support and garnering recognition even at the federal level.

## FOSTERING ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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Efforts to support academic success in the NTSZ have been ambitious and are making a difference for children of all ages. In 2008, the neighborhood's two after-school programs were consolidated and expanded into one comprehensive, flexible and future-oriented program for children at the elementary and middle schools. The B.O.L.D. Program (Building our Limitless Dreams), operated by the Boys and Girls Clubs and funded by the Jacksonville Children's Commission, provides academic enrichment, recreation and cultural activities for 250 children during after-school hours, along with case management and parent organizing.





The first-ever Quality Rated Very Early Learning Head Start in New Town opened in 2010 on the campus of Edward Water College through a partnership with the Jacksonville Urban League. In 2011, because of synergy between partners and the ongoing success of the NTSZ, Eugene Butler Middle School was chosen by United Way of Northeast Florida as its seventh Achievers for Life Program site. CSX executive vice president and chief financial officer Oscar Munoz and his wife Cathy provided a \$1 million gift to begin implementation.

Since the New Town initiative began, parental involvement at both S.P. Livingston and Eugene Butler has markedly increased. From the 2008-09 school year to 2009-10, S.P. Livingston went from an “F” school as measured by FCAT scores to a “C” school. By 2010-11 it had risen to a “B” school. Ninety-three percent of local children in the initial cohort of New Town Success Zone students have been promoted.

## IMPROVING HEALTH & WELLNESS

To support quality of life and academic success, a variety of initiatives have been undertaken to improve the health and wellness of children in the New Town Success Zone. One of the first benefits of the Zone was a partnership between Baptist Health of Northeast Florida and the United Way’s Full Service Schools program to provide eyeglasses to every child needing corrective lenses at S.P. Livingston Elementary School and Eugene Butler Middle School.

With funding from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund and Baptist Health, a comprehensive community health survey was designed and conducted in 2010 and repeated in 2011. Local residents helped to conduct the surveys; in fact, the community-involvement model pioneered in New Town is now being considered as a national model for community health assessments.

As a result of the initial health assessment, Baptist Health identified and addressed a need for asthma-related services, beginning a Community Asthma Project in 2010. The initiative provides asthma care education and environmental support for children and families, reducing school absences for children and missed work days for parents.

In 2011, Baptist Health provided a gift to secure a school nurse for both neighborhood schools. This is a significant benefit for New Town students, since the ratio of schools to nurses throughout Duval County is normally eight or nine to one.

To positively impact mental and emotional development of children in the Zone, the Community Foundation in Jacksonville



# MILESTONES & A

**PLANNING**  
**2007**

**INITIATION**  
**2008**

**DEVELOPMENT**  
**2009**

**APRIL:** Community leaders visit Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)  
**MAY:** Working group discusses replicating HCZ locally  
**DECEMBER:** Review of needs assessment for 8 neighborhoods

**FEBRUARY:** New Town is selected as Success Zone location  
**MAY:** Six community meetings introduce program to neighborhood  
**JULY:** Resident needs survey begins  
**AUGUST:** B.O.L.D. After-school program begins; Schell-Sweet Community Resource Center partners with NTSZ to provide support services to seniors and community residents

**APRIL:** Irvin PeDro Cohen joins NTSZ as Project Manager; Eyeglasses provided to children at S.P. Livingston and Eugene Butler  
**S.P. Livingston Elementary rated an "F" school based on FCAT scores**

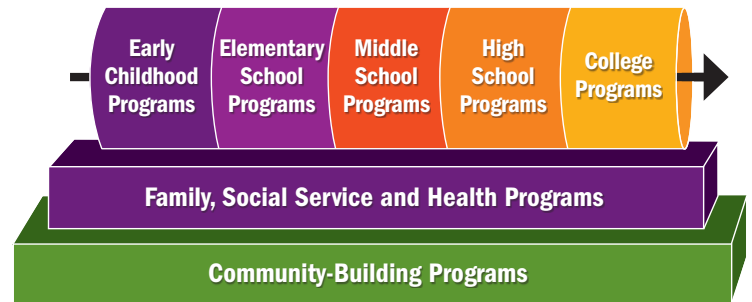
and the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition, Inc. funded a pilot parenting education project for NTSZ families. Implemented by Shands Jacksonville, the pilot utilized a research-based curriculum, *Foundations for Success in Parenting*, developed by the Jacksonville Children's Commission. Eventually dubbed "Jacksonville Baby University," the program provided group sessions at the Schell-Sweet Community Resource Center for families with young children. Still ongoing, Baby University provides valuable instruction in parent/caregiver-child interaction, including appropriate discipline, play, safety at home, and the importance of reading out loud to young children to improve pre-literacy skills.

With partners including Work Source, Florida State College at Jacksonville and Second Harvest Food Bank, the center provides seniors and community residents with employment services, food assistance, and education and support for families and parents.

## QUALITY OF LIFE & COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT

In addition to providing services specifically for children, Success Zone leaders and partners are committed to effecting positive change in the larger community. An early reflection of that commitment was the opening of a Community Resource Center at Edward Waters College's Schell-Sweet Center in 2008.

## NEW TOWN SUCCESS ZONE PROJECT PIPELINE



**THE PROJECT PIPELINE** represents a continuum of care philosophy, where underprivileged children are surrounded by supportive adults and a myriad of community services, which help to strengthen and empower families to work towards achieving positive outcomes and higher education for their children.





# CCOMPLISHMENTS

PROGRESS

2010

MORE PROGRESS

2011

RECOGNITION

2012

**MARCH:** PhotoVoice Project begins

**APRIL:** First Community Health Survey begins

**AUGUST:** Baby University pilot program begins; Community Asthma Program begins; Very Early Learning Head Start opens at EWC

**NOVEMBER:** Initial phase of *A Brush with Kindness* partnership

*S.P. Livingston rises to a "C" school*

**MAY:** Groundbreaking for Success Park

**JULY:** Butler Middle School becomes Achievers for Life site

**SEPTEMBER:** School nurse provided for both neighborhood schools

**OCTOBER:** Second Community Health Survey takes place

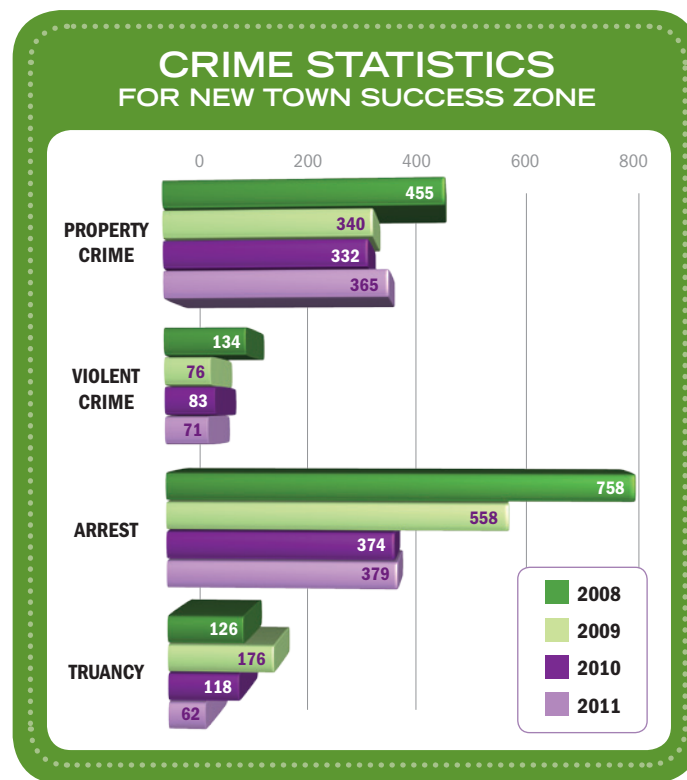
*S.P. Livingston becomes a "B" school*

**MARCH:** NTSZ designated a State Children's Initiative; EWC and NTSZ named to President's Community Service Honor Roll; Habijax leads "Blitz Build," constructing 12 homes in 6 days; Habijax announces plans for \$16 million/4-year investment in NTSZ

**APRIL:** HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan visits NTSZ with Mayor Alvin Brown; New Town residents' PhotoVoice projects featured at National Healthy Start Conference in Washington, D.C.

One problem identified by residents early in the NTSZ project was the lack of a safe place for local children to play. As a direct response to that concern, Edward Waters College and the City of Jacksonville broke ground in 2011 on Success Park. The park will include a state of the art playground and provide a place for seniors to exercise. The land was donated by Edward Waters College. And the playground equipment and construction are being provided by the City of Jacksonville, with completion anticipated in late 2012.

In response to residents' requests for improved relationships with law enforcement, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office participates in regular meetings in the neighborhood and has become an even more visible presence in the neighborhood. Collaborative relationships have evolved, and residents are feeling safer. The collaborative relationships that have evolved are making residents feel safer, and the facts bear them out. Between 2008 and 2011 crime statistics in the area show a 45 percent or more reduction in violent crime, arrests, and truancy. Property crime has been reduced nearly 20 percent.



## ADVOCACY & EMPOWERMENT

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As residents have become increasingly involved in the New Town Success Zone project, a number of them have also become advocates in the larger community. Thanks to the efforts of one local grandmother, for example, a city-constructed fence now surrounds a retention pond that posed a hazard for local children near a school bus stop.



Beginning in March of 2010, female residents of New Town also began participating in a community-based empowerment, advocacy and leadership initiative. The PhotoVoice Project helps women expand or acquire photography skills and use them to document assets and challenges in the neighborhood. The photographs serve as a springboard to then communicate neighborhood concerns and possible solutions with New Town policy makers and community leaders and advocate for the neighborhood.

The *Strengthening the Voices of Women in New Town* initiative is a collaboration between the Early Childhood Committee of the New Town Success Zone and the Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women (MCSOW). It is supported by the generous contributions of the Women's Giving Alliance, the Chartrand Foundation, the International Brotherhood of Police Officers and Theresa Graham of the MCSOW.



# Stories of New Town

## MS. RIVERS GOES TO WASHINGTON

A customer service representative for the University of Florida healthcare system, New Town resident Gladys Rivers is the mother of three young children. She's also an enthusiastic participant in NTSZ's PhotoVoice Project, *Strengthening the Voices of Women in New Town: Making our Neighborhood Better for Children (SVWN)*. In that role, she traveled to the nation's capital in March, 2012 to attend the Annual Spring Conference of the National Healthy Start Association.

The conference brought together representatives from 103 federal Healthy Start programs across the country and featured an array of workshops and poster presentations, including one on the New Town project, which helps local women acquire or improve their photography skills to tell a story about their community. New Town resident Dana Gregg, NTSZ Early Childhood Subcommittee co-chair Joy Burgess and others from the local Healthy Start Coalition joined Rivers in representing the project to a national audience and meeting various elected and appointed officials.

Delighted to be in D.C. and to represent their hometown at a national conference, the NTSZ group had an enjoyable and productive trip. After joining other participants for a quick refresher course on Congressional protocol, they set off for Capitol Hill, where they met with staff members in the offices of Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL) and Rep. Corrine Brown (D-FL). They attended presentations and workshops at the conference as well as participating in the poster presentation.

According to Ms. Rivers, the experience was educational and inspiring. "The conference speakers were just so motivational,

and an encouragement to me," she said. "The poster presentation went wonderful. I met a lot of people from other cities [in the] United States. The workshops were outstanding...educating me on different topics."

In a note to Carol Brady of the Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition, Rivers expressed her thanks for the experience by sharing a quote from author Melody Beattie: "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."

The trip to Washington may be over, but its repercussions will continue to be felt. And Gladys Rivers will clearly be using what she's learned about photography and community advocacy to take more pictures and create her own vision for tomorrow.

**Gladys Rivers, New Town Resident**



## SYNERGY & RECOGNITION

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As things have changed for the better in the New Town neighborhood, the Success Zone project has generated remarkable and productive partnerships between community organizations, residents and volunteers. In contrast to its highly-centralized inspiration, the Harlem Children's Zone, New Town Success Zone is flat, non-bureaucratic and fueled almost exclusively by the energy, funding and commitment of its partners. Officially headquartered at Edward Waters College, its only employee at this point is its director.

This unique effort and its success have inspired other organizations to become involved and drawn additional support and recognition. In 2012 alone, the New Town Success Zone was designated a State Children's Initiative by the State of Florida and named to the President's Community



Service Honor Roll along with Edward Waters College. The U.S. Secretary for Housing and Urban Development, Shaun Donovan, recently visited the Zone at the invitation of Mayor Alvin Brown. And New Town residents' PhotoVoice projects were featured at the National Healthy Start Conference in Washington, D.C., telling the story of a neighborhood that is moving in the right direction.



The New Town Success Zone Steering Committee continues to meet monthly to hear reports on the activities of its subcommittees and the various partners, and to continue the process of building a pathway of success for children and their families.



# Stories of New Town

## THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

As Habijax's President & CEO, Mary Kay O'Rourke has witnessed firsthand the positive results of collaboration among organizations working in the New Town Success Zone.

"Habijax got involved with New Town in 2008, when the whole nonprofit sector was suffering from reduced funding," said O'Rourke. "We were looking at our strengths and really trying to identify ways to maximize our impact. We had built about 1,600 homes in five different neighborhoods in Jacksonville and there were a lot of successes, but the areas were still distressed and families were struggling."

After much discussion, the organization decided to focus on one neighborhood instead of five. "We wanted to generate synergy with other partners to create a sustainable neighborhood," she recalled, "and we began going to some of the New Town meetings. They asked us to be the housing partner, and we've been involved with them ever since!"

As a result of its concentration on one neighborhood, Habijax shifted from its previous role as a new home builder to an expanded role in community development. The organization completed a visual assessment of every house in the neighborhood; the results from this survey have helped Habijax develop a long term plan for New Town. They have purchased abandoned or foreclosed homes to rehabilitate and provided repairs and renovations to existing homes, as well as building new homes in the neighborhood. Habijax estimates that they will work in New Town for a minimum of four years, and serve

over 400 families through homeownership and repair programs.

Throughout the process, O'Rourke has been delighted with the partners involved in the effort and with the way the whole effort has come together.

"I've been so impressed with all the partners," she stated. "They meet regularly, they bring their own money to the table, and everyone has a passion to do their piece of work for the good of the whole community."

"The neighborhood was a great choice, and I love the fact that the service providers aren't competing or creating another entity to do this work," she concluded. "They are just teaming up with the residents and getting it done."

**Mary Kay O'Rourke, *Habijax***



## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Some say that when you're doing what you love, you never work a day in your life. I couldn't agree more, and that is doubly true when you have the elevated sense of purpose provided by an endeavor like the New Town Success Zone. The level of commitment brought to the table by the people and agencies working on this project is nothing short of amazing, and it is an inspiration to me every day.

Perhaps the most joyful aspect of the work has been the sense of pride that is now palpable in residents and children whose potential had for years been discounted by the larger community. Although we are far from done with our work here, we are many steps ahead of where we were – and commitment is strong from both residents and outside agents. The dawn of a new day is in sight, and I know the partners and residents will continue to do what is right for the New Town Success Zone.



Irvin PeDro Cohen



## NEW TOWN LEADERSHIP TEAM



Nat Glover, *Co-Chair*



Pam Paul, *Co-Chair*



Irvin PeDro Cohen, *Director*

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## WORKING COMMITTEES

### Early Childhood

Mary Nash, *Jacksonville Children's Commission*  
Susan Mankowski, *Jacksonville Public Library*

### Neighborhood Safety & Stabilization

Carson Tranquille, *Jacksonville Sheriff's Office*  
Larry Jones, *Jacksonville Sheriff's Office*

### Public Education

Cedric Hicks, *Boys & Girls Club of Northeast Florida*  
Artie Brown, *University of North Florida*

### Healthcare

Lynn Sherman, *Baptist Health of Northeast Florida*  
Donna Ghanayem, *Shands Jacksonville*



# NEW TOWN SUCCESS ZONE PARTNERS

Baptist Health of Northeast Florida  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Florida  
Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida  
Celebration Baptist Church  
Chartrand Foundation  
City of Jacksonville  
The Community Foundation in Jacksonville  
Duval County Public Schools  
Edward Waters College  
Family Support Services of North Florida  
Florida Department of Children and Families  
Florida State College at Jacksonville  
Girl Scouts of Gateway Council  
HabiJax  
Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida  
Healthy Start Coalition of Northeast Florida  
International Brotherhood of Police Officers  
Jacksonville Children's Commission  
Jacksonville Housing Authority  
Jacksonville Public Library  
Jacksonville Sheriff's Office

Jacksonville Urban League  
JEA  
Jessie Ball duPont Fund  
The Links Incorporated  
Mayor's Council on the Status of Women  
Northeast Florida Builder's Association  
Oscar and Cathy Munoz  
St. Vincent's Healthcare  
Schell-Sweet Community Resource Center  
Second Harvest North Florida  
Shands Jacksonville  
United Way of Northeast Florida  
University of Florida  
University of North Florida  
War on Poverty Florida, Inc.  
Wells Fargo  
West Union Baptist Church  
Women's Giving Alliance  
WorkSource  
Mr. Daniel Wynn  
Zeta Phi Beta Sorority



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