



**Project Beacon:
Building Safe Homes and Vibrant Futures for People with
Autism and other Neurodiversities**

The next empty bed or homelessness should not be the only choices for adults with autism, intellectual-developmental disabilities, or other neurodiversities¹.

Introduction - A Bold Solution to a Pervasive, Growing Problem

A perfect storm -- insufficient resources, overwhelming demand for services, and aging caregivers -- threatens the wellbeing of individuals and families impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other neurodiversities. According to Autism Speaks, more than half of individuals diagnosed with ASD also deal with an Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD). In Texas, the waitlist for state-funded services for people with ASD/IDD can stretch well beyond a decade. With approximately 100 available beds in group homes and intermediate care facilities in Greater Houston, and tens of thousands of people with ASD/IDD on the waiting lists, family caregivers know that their loved ones with ASD/IDD may never get the government-funded supports they need, and to which they are entitled. The threat of homelessness for people with ASD/IDD looms large.

Family caregivers have cobbled together resources to the best of their ability, sacrificing their time, savings, employment options, and mental and physical health. They have taken it upon themselves to connect with other families and build the informal networks that get things done, despite the odds. These caregivers call up deep reserves of grit and determination, dedicating their talents to supporting their loved ones and the entire ASD/IDD community.

Despite these efforts, the perfect storm persists and grows stronger as the years progress. An estimated 70% of individuals with ASD/IDD live with their families, and 20% of family caregivers are age 60+. Knowing that the day will come when they can no longer care for their loved ones, a group of family caregivers and skilled advocates in Greater Houston have banded together to envision and execute a bold solution: **Project Beacon**. Leveraging their considerable skills and professional networks (in finance, law, real estate, and other relevant fields), decades of personal experience with ASD/IDD, and the expertise of seasoned professionals in ASD/IDD service provision, they have initiated preliminary steps towards building a long-term services and supports and eventually a

¹ *A Place in the World: Fueling Housing and Community Options for Adults with Autism and other Neurodiversities*, First Place AZ, First Place Global Leadership Institute, Madison House Autism Foundation, Autism Housing Network, Arizona State University Morrison Institute for Public Policy, December 2020.



customized residential community. More than just a place to live, the residence (and associated social, educational, and vocational programming) will be a place to thrive; an inclusive, sustainable home where residents can form friendships, develop life skills, secure jobs, and become vital and visible members of the community

Project Beacon will shine its light to guide people with ASD/IDD toward homes and supportive communities. Early-stage investors will help Project Beacon attract private and public funding, and hire professional staff to build our programs and offerings.

Drastic Mismatch between Needs and Supports

According to Texas Health and Human Services (as of December 2022):

- There are more than 300,000 people on the state interest lists to receive home and community-based support services and these interest lists can often last 10-15 years.
- It is estimated that only 7% of adults with ASD/IDD received support from a state agency.
- In the Greater Houston area, there are only 1,055 beds in group homes or care facilities, with only 105 vacant/available beds (not including private pay options that are typically fully occupied and financially out of reach for many families).

The advancing age of caregivers is of dire concern. Many people with ASD/IDD will have nowhere to go once their caregivers become too frail to take care of them. The loss of a family caregiver is the main determinant of a person with ASD/IDD becoming homeless².

Project Beacon - a Distinctive, Multifaceted Approach

Our Mission

Our mission is to build a community of belonging where adults with Autism and other Neurodiversities can Play, Learn, Work, and Live.

Vision – A Place Called Home

Our long-term goal is to build an intentional residential community for 40-60 adults in a vibrant suburban setting that fully embraces and supports its neurodiverse neighbors. We envision a community designed for individual autonomy and safety and security, where residents can choose their support providers and living arrangements and engage in social and leisure activities at Project Beacon and the surrounding community.

² Brown, Michael and Edward McCann, "Homelessness and People with Intellectual Disabilities: A Systematic Review of the International Research Evidence," *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, v 34, n2, p. 390 – 401, March 2021.



Building for the Future - Programming

Home is just one part of the equation. Children with autism grow up to be adults with autism. Generation Z children are now coming into adulthood and fortunately, this is the first generation with consistent access to science-backed therapies like Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy. Unfortunately, while strides have been made to ensure children and adolescents receive appropriate interventions and therapies, the adult system of care has not kept up with designing adult programs using these same therapies and interventions.

To address this need in the North Houston area, Project Beacon is dedicated to designing and staffing our programs for adults with Autism, specifically giving them the tailored, individualized programs they need to succeed. Better still, adults with other neurodiversities will also benefit from these structured programs that promote independence with the appropriate amount of support needed. Our programs will also have systematic strategies for teaching and gaining new skills in a highly enriched and supported environment and will help adults gain the skills needed to live in an independent, supported community.

Building these programs alongside our partners and other experts – and informed by our research and benchmarked best practices throughout the US to determine sequencing and focus areas – will hone our long-term plans to build a residential community in future years. These programs will also offer immediate respite, social enrichment, and ultimately vocational programs to engage North Houston adults today – and to provide essential resources for their parents and families.

Years One & Two – Social Enrichment and Learning Programs

Beginning in 2023, Project Beacon will host volunteer-led Social Enrichment programs designed to create pathways for friendship and social skill development. This important first step has the immediate benefit of helping to combat social isolation and loneliness for the anticipated 15-20 older adolescents and adults in the program. It will also give Project Beacon the opportunity to get to know the young adults who could one day become a part of our residential offering. We will engage expert volunteers and our partners to build this initial program and connect with families needing these services. We expect these programs will take place at area community centers, partner agencies, and other shared spaces.



We expect to add to our program offerings each year and expand the number of adults served. Beginning in year two, informed by the outcomes of our initial pilot program, we plan to implement Individualized Day Programs that teach the skills needed for appropriate independence, including domestic home-living, social, communication, behavioral self-regulation, recreation and leisure, and early vocational skills. We are currently working to confirm the final staffing requirements and space needs for this expansion and expect to serve 15-20 adults in the program's first year.

Years Three & Four – Vocational Programs and Transition Academy

In 2025, Project Beacon plans to begin offering vocational training programs. These training programs will help our adults learn the skills needed for successful employment or participation in a vocation program for purpose-filled days. Project Beacon will also look for stimulating and profitable enterprise opportunities to support the sustainability of our community and offer our residents chances for viable employment. Some residents at Project Beacon will be able to participate in competitive employment positions within the community, while others may need supported employment. We will be actively seeking corporate partners for this stage of our programming.

In 2026, in preparation for the residential living community, Project Beacon will also begin offering a Transition Academy. This highly structured and supported program gives students the opportunity to learn crucial living and work skills before transitioning to a more independent living option. This best-in-class approach has been implemented with high rates of success in other communities across the US, including [add examples]. [Does Project Beacon have projections about the number of adults in this program?]

Project Beacon - a Distinctive, Multifaceted Approach

Project Beacon will not just build apartments or homes; it will create a template for cultivating community, supporting families, and helping people with ASD/IDD realize their social, emotional, and vocational potential. By sharing its approach and operational template with other cities and towns, national organizations, and Houston-based nonprofits, Project Beacon also will build a movement – cultivating strong, stable, vibrant ecosystems of support for people with ASD/IDD and their caregivers.

Phase One of Project Beacon will feature its first residential living community, a place where people with ASD/IDD can live independently but still access the long-term support services they need. Supportive community amenities will include health and fitness



activities, social groups and events, vocational supports, and Resident Advisors³ to supervise and manage these amenities. The Phase One residence will be designed for people with low- to moderate support needs. As the project grows and additional phases are built, Project Beacon will work to welcome residents with higher support needs, including those who require daily medical care, memory care, or high behavioral support.

Project Beacon will raise the visibility of people with ASD/IDD and normalize their participation in the community. Ideally, the Phase One residence will be located close to a vibrant suburban center, where residents can become visible, active participants in community life -- from special community events to everyday activities like shopping, working, and using public and private transportation services.

Project Beacon's Leadership

Project Beacon's Board is comprised of family caregivers, ASD/IDD advocates, and seasoned professionals who manage highly-complex projects and transactions. For example, the board includes senior executives from ExxonMobil who have managed global real estate development projects; an executive from Rice University with extensive finance and investment experience; and, a consultant to who provides strategic planning services to Fortune 100 companies. The family caregivers on Project Beacon's board have spent decades finding resources, forming supportive communities, and fighting for the rights and dignity of their children. They have lived every day with the people that Project Beacon will serve; they know what it will take to get it right. Project Beacon has engaged a consulting firm⁵ to help form its early business plan (e.g. number of residents, structure of its approach, etc.). The organization's board members have visited other residential communities to establish benchmarks for success and have formed relationships with other Houston nonprofit organizations⁶ to better understand the civic landscape and identify valuable partnership opportunities.

Current Status, and Need for Early Investors

Project Beacon is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 organization with an experienced fiscal sponsor, Players Philanthropy Fund⁷. Its leaders are beginning to investigate potential sites and

³ Live-in Resident Advisors have been successfully deployed at other residential communities in other states.

⁵ LTO Ventures develops affordable housing, integrated employment, and social engagement options for adults with IDD/ADD in communities nationwide. More information at ltoventures.org.

⁶ These nonprofits include Avondale House (educational, residential, and other services for people with ASD), HEART (Housing, Entrepreneurship, and Readiness Training), and Bloom (comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services).

⁷ Players Philanthropy Fund (PPF) provides fiscal sponsorship, donor advised funds, and other advisory services to 340+ charitable entities based in 47 states and 12 countries. More information at ppf.org.



builders for Phase One, focusing on a self-contained, custom-built, low-rise apartment community that will house 50 - 60 residents. While planning is underway and the residential community is under development, Project Beacon will begin its partnerships with other community nonprofits and launch social enrichment events, and educational and vocational programs.

Project Beacon is a major endeavor that requires more than a part-time, volunteer board. Its first paid professional, an Executive Director, will reflect our vision, oversee the logistics of Phase One (building the residences, hiring staff, marketing to potential residents, etc.), and collaborate with board members on fundraising and community partnerships. Funding to support the salary and benefits of the Executive Director is a key milestone in Project Beacon's five-year plan. Early budget estimates place the costs of opening Phase One, including real estate development, personnel, marketing, and other affiliated expenses, at \$15 million - \$20 million. In addition, Phase One investments will support a key element of Project Beacon's plan: cultivating the expertise, partnerships, and procedures that will inform the establishment of other residential communities and form the operational template that Project Beacon will share with other cities and towns. The board's goal is to have 20% of the budget in hand before breaking ground, welcoming residents within two years of groundbreaking. In 2023, Project Beacon aims to raise \$750,000 to hire an Executive Director, conduct early due diligence for site selection and design of Phase One, and execute additional fundraising efforts.

Supporting Lives of Self-Agency and Purpose

Self-agency and purpose are not a privilege; they are a birthright. Everyone deserves friends and family, fulfilling work, a safe place to live, and a sense of belonging in the community. Given the dearth of resources for people with ASD/IDD, this birthright is far from being realized. While great strides have been made in the provision of other supports (such as vocational services), high-quality residential options remain elusive. Project Beacon will shine its light upon the ASD/IDD community, mitigating the series of circumstances that, if left unaddressed, will threaten people's ability to live full and vibrant lives. Early-stage investors will play a key role in creating a model of community living that will support individuals and families in Greater Houston and nationwide.

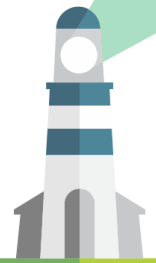
Our Strategic Roadmap

Our Vision:

Safe Homes and Vibrant Futures for Adults with Autism and Other Neurodiversities

Our Mission:

Build a community of belonging where adults with Autism and Other Neurodiversities can Play, Learn, Work, and Live.



Founded 2021

project beacon



Professionally Designed Volunteer-Led
2023



Social Enrichment Programs to form pathways for friendship and social skill development



Advancement Director
Operations Director
Financial Officer
Professional Staff (BCBA, RBT)
2025

Vocation Training and Programs to learn skills needed for successful employment or participation in a vocation program to provide purpose-filled days.



CHRO
Professional Staff (BCBA, RBT)
Residential Operations Director
Residential Operations Staff (2027)
2026

Transition Academy is a highly structured and supported program that gives students the opportunity to learn crucial living and work skills before transitioning to a more independent living option.



Intentional Residential Community where adults with autism and other neurodiversities can live in a supported, caring, inclusive environment where they can build a vibrant life full of purpose and meaning.

Long-Term Mission Intentional Residential Community

PBTX will continue adding to their professionally designed programs through the addition of a Vocation Training Program and a Transition Academy before finally culminating our vision of an intentional residential community.

Our Day Programs will continue to add enrollment year over year, ultimately serving 40-60 adults. The Day Program and Vocation Training Program enrollment will continue to grow and double the number of adults served annually by PBTX.



An estimated fifty thousand adults with a cognitive disability live in North Harris County and Montgomery County. That number is the equivalent of three Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilions filled to capacity, seats and lawn.

Near-Term Mission Social Enrichment

In 2023 PBTX will host six (6) volunteer-led social enrichment events with 15-20 older adolescents and young adults in attendance.

In 2024 PBTX will host monthly (12) staffed outings and events. PBTX has the opportunity to make 270 unique positive learning impressions with the community we serve.

Near-Term Mission Individualized Day Programs

Provide individualized programs with positive behavioral supports for skill development in the following skill areas: Domestic Home-Living, Social, Communication, Behavioral self-regulation, recreation and leisure, and early vocational skills.

Program design and professional staff ratio will be for 20% high-need students and 80% moderate-need students. 2024-2025 Target enrollment is 20 students.

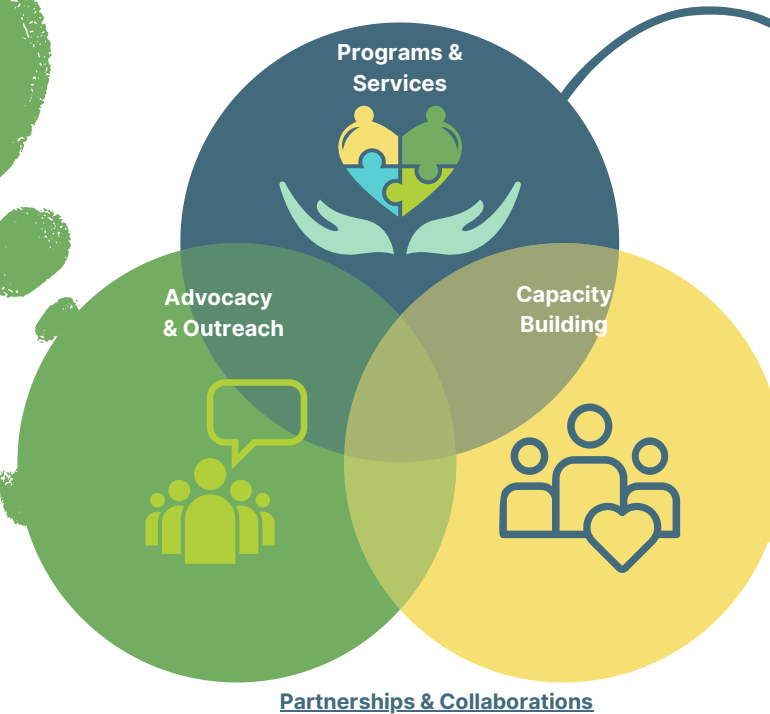
Our Approach

Children with Autism grow up to be adults with Autism. Generation Z children are now coming into adulthood. This is the first generation with consistent access to science-backed therapies like ABA, but unfortunately, the adult system of care has not kept up with designing innovative programs that challenge the status quo using these same successful therapies and interventions.

Project Beacon is dedicated to designing and staffing our programs for adults with Autism, to specifically giving them the tailored, individualized programs they need to succeed. Better still, adults with other neurodiversities will also benefit from the structured programs that promote independence with the appropriate amount of support needed. Our programs will also have systematic strategies for teaching and gaining new skills in a highly enriched and supported environment.

Underemployment/Unemployment
 Poor Healthcare Outcomes
 Economic Sustainability
 Medicaid Differences & System Complexity
 Aging / Burned-Out Caregivers
 No One-Size Fits All Solution
 First Responder Training
 Homelessness / Housing Crisis

Market Immaturity & Sustainability
 Market Heterogeneity
 DSP Outlook
 Behavioral Health
 Abuse / Crime
 Research & Data Collection



- Lone Star College LifePATH - Advisory Board
- Montgomery County Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention Task Force - Team 4 Housing
- Interfaith of the Woodlands - Neurodiverse Community Networking Group, Founders
- Inspire ND - Program Partner
- Texas Autism Academy - Community Awareness Partner
- Families for Effective Autism Treatment - Amy Wood, President
- Montgomery County Commissioner's Court - Housing Market Analysis Study (Pending)
- Montgomery County Sherriff's Office - First Responder Training and Community Awareness Partner
- First Place Global Leadership Institute - Member
- Make Waves Center for Community Development - Partner

Programs & Services designed to meet the needs of the WHOLE person

