



2016 Awards Showcase

Connection . Diligence . Reach . Opportunity . Excellence

Introduction

Six Big Ideas for Our Great Region

The Our Great Region Awards recognize outstanding projects in the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) 13-county region that advance the goals and strategies outlined in the *Our Great Region 2040* plan (www.ourregion.org). This plan defines measurable goals for Our Region to be one of the world's greatest places to live, work, and succeed by the year 2040.

Strategies in the *Our Great Region 2040* plan are grouped into Big Ideas for six different topics highlighting areas of opportunity within Our Region.



Economic Development

Strengthening our economic competitiveness through an educated and skilled workforce



Environment

Securing a clean and ample water supply



Healthy Communities

Cultivating places where people can lead active, healthy lives



Housing

Providing balanced housing choices near jobs, services, and transportation options



Resiliency

Increasing our resiliency to disaster and a changing environment



Transportation

Achieving a world-class transportation network

Awards Showcase

The 29 projects featured by the Our Great Region Awards Showcase offer effective solutions and new opportunities for a wide array of Our Region's challenges from transportation and housing to disaster mitigation and small business development. This document showcases the work of all applicants, representing 19 communities, and recognizes their accomplishments as examples for others to follow.

For more information about the Our Great Region Awards, please visit www.ograwards.org.

Award Categories

Our Great Region Awards 2016

Truly representative of the *Our Great Region 2040* plan, the 2016 Our Great Region Award applicants are making progress across the six Big Ideas with projects addressing multiple objectives. As a result, the five award categories celebrate the interdisciplinary nature of this work and the qualities required for success.



Connection Award, page 3 honors a project that advances two or more of the *Our Great Region 2040* plan's strategies through innovative partnerships.



Diligence Award, page 10 honors a project that executed a creative and persistent approach to overcome challenges to implementation.



Reach Award, page 19 honors a project that demonstrates exemplary public participation.



Opportunity Award, page 26 honors a project that helps to overcome disparities in access to opportunity.

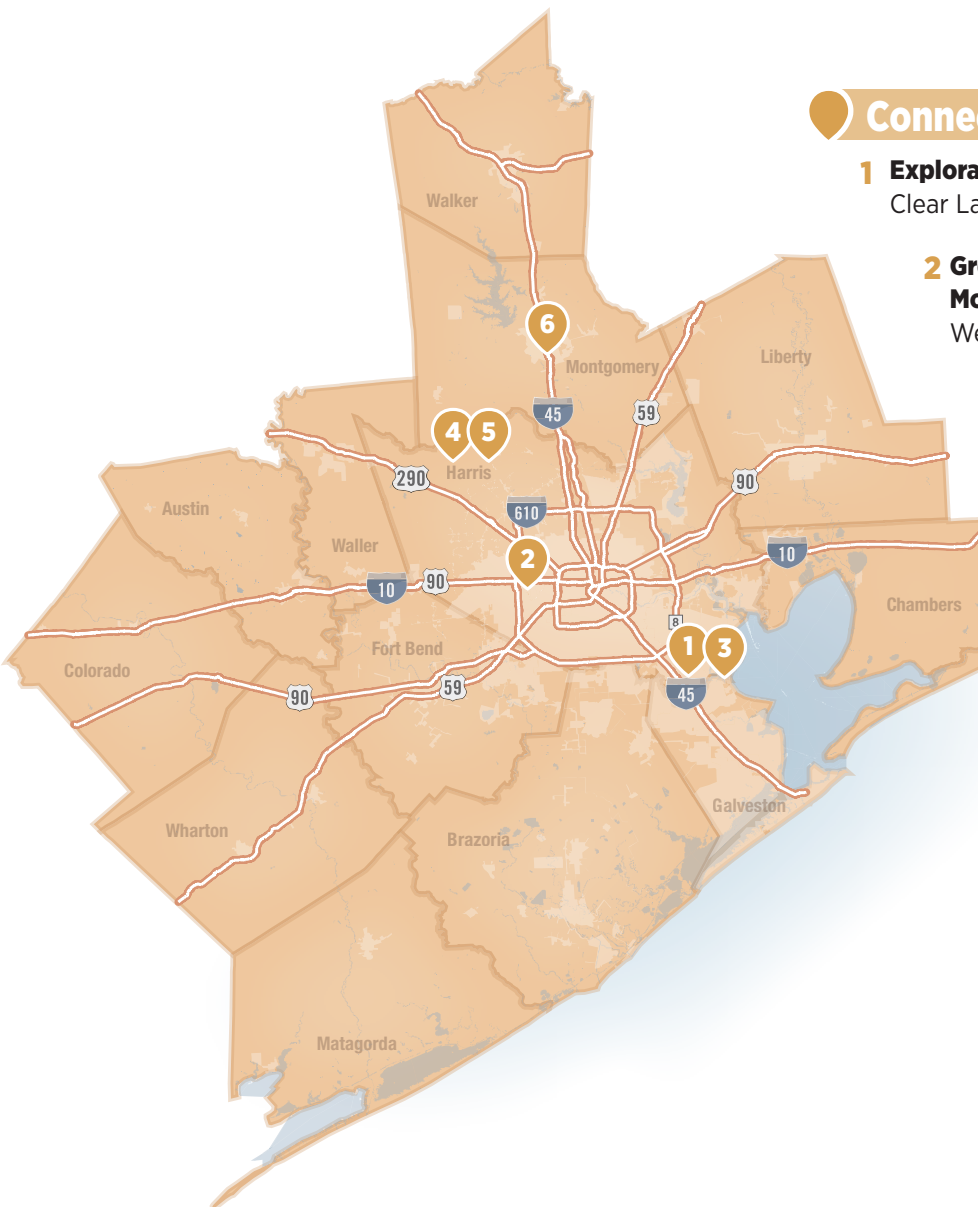


Excellence Award, page 31 is the highest honor bestowed by the Our Great Region Awards and honors a project that, overall, best advances the vision of the *Our Great Region 2040* plan.

Connection Showcase

Our Great Region Awards 2016

The Connection Award honors a project that advances two or more of the *Our Great Region 2040* plan's strategies through innovative partnerships. Six organizations applied for the Connection Award in 2016, each of which exemplify the interdisciplinary and partnership-building work that is critical to making Our Region a more vibrant place to live, work, and succeed.



Connection Award Applicants

- 1 Exploration Green Winner**
Clear Lake City Water Authority
- 2 Greater West Houston Mobility Plan Winner**
West Houston Association
- 3 Dr. Ned and Fay Dudney Clear Creek Nature Center Management Plan**
City of League City Parks & Cultural Services
- 4 Healthy Living Matters**
Harris County Public Health
- 5 Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan**
Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management
- 6 Senior Rides & Conroe Connection Pilot Project**
Meals on Wheels of Montgomery County



Exploration Green

Clear Lake City Water Authority



Volunteers cleaning Exploration Green

Severe flooding in 2015 and 2016 called attention to Our Region's acute need for improved stormwater management. In response, municipalities are considering innovative ways to address this need by creating park and conservation areas that also detain stormwater.

The Clear Lake City Water Authority's (CLCWA) Exploration Green project offers an example of creative thinking in this arena. Exploration Green has set aside land for both active recreation and stormwater detention through a coalition between the CLCWA and two partner organizations: the Galveston Bay Foundation (holding the conservation easement) and the Exploration Green Conservancy (responsible for maintenance). This unique conservation-maintenance partnership provides a model for other groups across Our Region and recognizes the critical intersections between conservation, active lifestyles, and resiliency.

Nearly 12 miles of trails provide a linchpin in the hike-and-bike trail system for Southeast Harris County.

-Clear Lake City Water Authority



Environment



Healthy Communities



Resiliency



Accepting the 2016 Connection Award



Greater West Houston Mobility Plan

West Houston Association



Plan rendering by Kimley Horn

Our Region continues to add thousands of new residents and jobs each year. To maintain high quality of life standards, communities must invest in innovative transportation infrastructure that accommodates current and future drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and cyclists.

The West Houston Association's *Greater West Houston Mobility Plan* brought together three management districts, the City of Houston, and the Houston West Chamber of Commerce to create a comprehensive mobility plan for the fast-growing West Houston area. A careful planning process highlighted the shared needs of each partner, leading to a holistic framework for implementation. The coalition now has a mobility plan that lays out a collective vision for improved mobility through coordinated, multimodal investments among the distinct districts within West Houston.

This project brought together management districts and public agencies to more holistically address challenges to multi-modal connectivity.

-West Houston Association



Transportation



Healthy Communities



Resiliency



Accepting the 2016 Connection Award

Dr. Ned and Fay Dudney Clear Creek Nature Center Management Plan

City of League City Parks & Cultural Services



Observation deck at the nature center

In Galveston County, the coastal wetlands of Clear Creek connect the area's urban and suburban communities to Galveston Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. As Our Region continues to grow, preserving areas like Clear Creek and other scenic waterways will become increasingly important for future generations.

The management plan for the Dr. Ned and Fay Dudney Clear Creek Nature Center balances the conservation of the Clear Creek habitat with the provision of future recreation opportunities along the water, including walking and biking trails. The partnership between the City of League City, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service brought state, local, and national expertise to the project. Moving forward, the plan serves as a guidebook for ensuring both public use and natural resource protection along this vital segment of the Clear Creek waterway.

The management plan will provide a road map for park conservation efforts at the nature center for generations to come.

*-City of League City
Parks & Cultural Services*



Environment



Healthy Communities



New nature center trail

Healthy Living Matters

Harris County Public Health



Healthy Living Matters summit

Over 40 percent of children ages 5 to 17 in Harris County are overweight or obese. Addressing the health and well-being of Our Region's youth will be necessary for communities to be successful. Fortunately, there are many stakeholders working to improve child health and wellness.

Healthy Living Matters was formed five years ago as a multi-sector initiative to reduce childhood obesity. Healthy Living Matters includes more than 80 members who developed a Community Action Plan in 2014. The coalition is now implementing that plan in targeted neighborhoods of Harris County through community engagement. This partnership represents the type of collaborative work that will bring about a healthier community by 2040 and beyond.

Healthy Living Matters mobilizes partners from all sectors including schools, parks, planning, transportation, economic development, healthcare, business, elected officials, and youth and families themselves.

-Healthy Living Matters



Healthy Communities



Restaurant offering healthy menu options

Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management



Volunteers distributing water after Hurricane Ike

Communities across Our Region are vulnerable to severe weather events. Building resilience to natural disasters like Hurricane Ike and Tropical Storm Allison requires advanced planning to achieve a coordinated response.

Through their Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, municipalities in Harris County are at the leading edge of collaboration to reduce the risks from natural hazards. A partnership between Harris County, 28 cities, and four special purpose districts coalesced to create an integrated, countywide plan, weaving hazard mitigation best practices into everyday government functions. The plan incorporates the individual needs of each partner and was developed using the staffing time and resources of the participating municipalities. This concerted effort makes Our Region safer and more resilient in the face of future storms.

Resiliency was enhanced by creating a single and unified voice on hazard mitigation and developing working relationships between emergency managers, floodplain administrators, and other development agencies.

-Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management



Resiliency



Damaged trailer suspended over water in Harris County

Senior Rides & Conroe Connection Pilot Project

Meals on Wheels of Montgomery County



Conroe Connection rider

All residents of Our Region should have affordable and reliable access to work, retail, recreation, and other amenities. Access for the elderly and disabled presents specific challenges, often requiring specialized equipment and door-to-door service.

Meals on Wheels of Montgomery County and their partners at the City of Conroe and United Way of the Greater Houston Area partnered to pilot an enhanced mobility program for senior citizens and residents with disabilities. The initiative aimed to free up seat space in the often-overbooked Senior Rides program by educating its users about Conroe Connection, a new, fixed-route paratransit service. By partnering, Conroe Connection and Senior Rides were able to serve a greater number of Montgomery County residents than they could individually, providing a valuable model for other transit providers in Our Region to emulate.

Senior Rides users that now use Conroe Connection report great appreciation for the flexibility and independence of dependable local transit service.

-Meals on Wheels of Montgomery County



Transportation



Healthy Communities

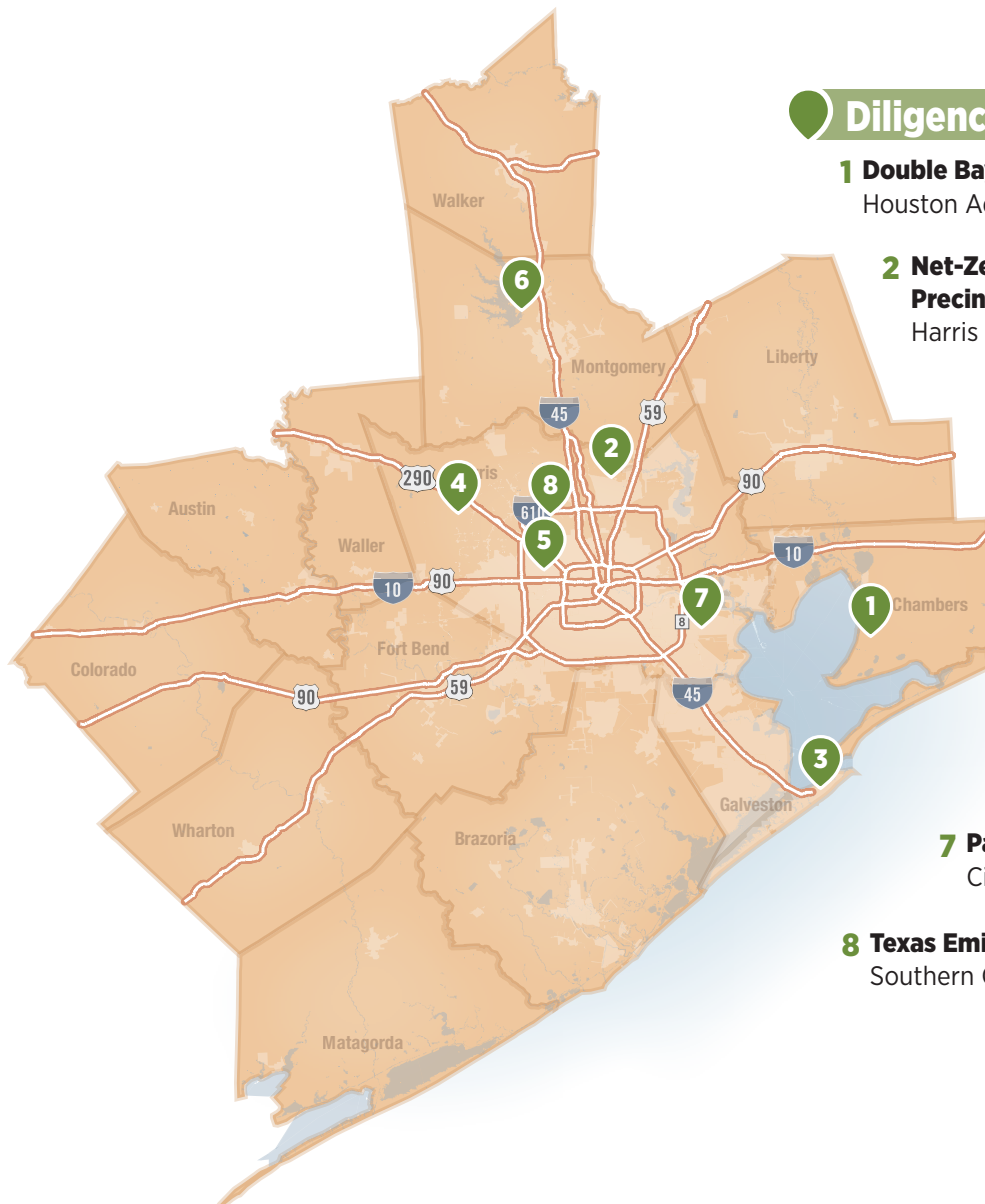


MEALS on WHEELS
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Diligence Showcase

Our Great Region Awards 2016

The Diligence Award honors an implemented project that executed a creative and persistent approach to overcome challenges to implementation. Eight organizations applied for the Diligence Award in 2016, each demonstrating the importance of innovation and follow-through in the pursuit of inspiring projects throughout Our Region.



Diligence Award Applicants

- 1 Double Bayou Watershed Protection Plan *Winner***
Houston Advanced Research Center
- 2 Net-Zero Energy Restroom Prototype in Precinct 4 Carter Park *Honorable Mention***
Harris County Engineering Department
- 3 East Plant Design & Construction**
University of Texas Medical Branch
- 4 Hidden Creek**
The Howard Hughes Corporation and Bridgeland
- 5 Kolbe Farms**
InTown Homes
- 6 Lakes Edge Boat House**
The Woodlands Development Company and the Howard Hughes Corporation
- 7 Patrick's Bayou Detention Pond**
City of Deer Park
- 8 Texas Emissions Reduction Plan Vehicle Recycling**
Southern Core Recycling



Double Bayou Watershed Protection Plan

Houston Advanced Research Center



Double Bayou

Our Region contains over 16,000 miles of waterways and shorelines that feed into the Gulf of Mexico, tying our communities together. As they hold such a critical place in our economy and environment, it is important to ensure Our Region's waterways remain healthy by implementing watershed protection plans.

To expand upon Our Region's current slate of watershed protection plans, the Houston Advanced Research Center (HARC) developed a watershed protection plan for the Double Bayou Watershed in Chambers and Liberty counties. HARC installed new water quality data gauges to help overcome data scarcity challenges. The Double Bayou plan demonstrates how the many rural communities of Our Region can take action to prioritize water quality in the face of data shortages and resource constraints.

Management measures and public outreach efforts have been recommended to restore and protect the vital water resources of the watershed.

-Houston Advanced Research Center



Environment



Accepting the 2016 Diligence Award



Net-Zero Energy Restroom Prototype in Precinct 4 Carter Park

Harris County Engineering Department



Restroom under construction

When local governments decide to connect residents to the abundance of green space in Our Region, infrastructure needs can be a major barrier. Installation of new trail lights, restrooms, and electric, water, and sewage lines to secluded nature centers can be costly and disruptive to natural landscapes.

The Harris County Engineering Department has tackled this problem head-on through its Net-Zero Energy Restroom Prototype project in Carter Park. The prototype, along a hike and bike trail, was conceived and constructed to be self-sustaining. The building was designed by a team of eight interns and constructed in-house by Harris County crews. The restroom is also connected to a set of monitors that will collect data on the functioning of the water, sewer, and electric components of the prototype. If it functions as designed, this method can be duplicated across the region to add amenities to green space while saving money on infrastructure and construction costs.

Lesson learned during the design phase: allowing full creative license yields innovative results.

-Harris County Engineering Department



Environment



Healthy Communities



Accepting the 2016 Diligence Honorable Mention Award

East Plant Design & Construction

University of Texas Medical Branch



View of the Gulf of Mexico from the East Plant

Severe weather events highlight the urgent need for medical infrastructure during Our Region's most vulnerable moments. Even if thousands of homes lose power and residents are encouraged to stay in place, hospitals and their patients cannot afford outages.

After Hurricane Ike, The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) Galveston began preparing for future severe storms. As one of only three Level 1 Trauma Centers in the region, UTMB constructed a state-of-the-art water chilling and heating facility that creates its own electricity and is more energy-efficient than UTMB's former plant. The construction of the new East Plant allows for continued heating, ventilation, and air conditioning even in the case of a 25-foot storm surge. Not only does the East Plant cut annual energy costs for UTMB by millions of dollars, but it also means more people are kept healthy and safe during moments of crisis.

The unique design of the building ensures all critical equipment is above 25 feet and out of any storm surge threat elevations. In addition to the added resiliency, the plant helps dramatically reduce the cost of producing utilities for the campus.

-University of Texas Medical Branch



Environment



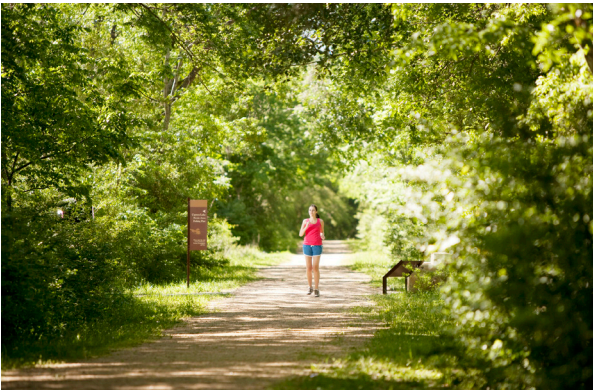
Resiliency



East Plant control center

Hidden Creek

The Howard Hughes Corporation and Bridgeland



Jogger on Hidden Creek trails

Northwest Harris County is one of the fastest growing areas of Our Region. As communities and developers make plans to accommodate new residents, it is necessary to consider development patterns that complement Our Region's natural beauty and green space.

The Howard Hughes Corporation has embraced responsible and amenity-rich development in its new Hidden Creek neighborhood. Hidden Creek includes 1,000 new homes for the growing region while maintaining 140 acres of waterways and 30 acres of park space with trails. This new neighborhood, nestled in the larger Bridgeland development, prioritizes responsible stormwater detention, native plantings, reforestation, and creek restoration. As residential and commercial development continues in Our Region, Hidden Creek offers an example of incorporating nature into developments.

Nature's balance is important, so the development works to preserve the environment.

-The Howard Hughes Corporation



Healthy Communities



Environment



Housing



Bridgeland entrance

Kolbe Farms

InTown Homes



Kolbe Farms homes

The Houston-Galveston area is projected to add 3.5 million residents by 2040. As new housing is built to meet the demand of a growing population in Our Region, we have a tremendous opportunity to design new structures in green and healthy ways.

InTown Homes demonstrates the responsible construction of new homes through their Kolbe Farms development in northwest Houston. From their original investment over 15 years ago, InTown Homes has committed to building at the highest standards for sustainability and energy efficiency. Alongside the benefits of eco-friendly homes, Kolbe Farms also provides a walkable street design and green space amenities that enhance the quality of life for residents. This type of development allows Our Region to responsibly meet the ever-growing need for housing.

This walkable community provides residents a greater quality of life, promotes active, healthy living, and brings neighbors closer together.

-InTown Homes



Healthy Communities



Environment



Housing



Kolbe Farms housing and bridge

Lakes Edge Boat House

The Woodlands Development Company and The Howard Hughes Corporation



Lakes Edge Boat House sign

One of Our Region's greatest strengths is its wealth of natural waterways that serve as recreational backbones in many communities. Additional infrastructure, even on a small scale, can increase access and activity on bayous, lakes, creeks, and beaches.

A partnership in The Woodlands demonstrated the impact of this type of infrastructure with the construction of the Lakes Edge Boat House. The boat house adds to existing recreational amenities and is built with renewable materials, recycled water to irrigate its green wall, and a solar panel roof. The Woodlands Development Company and The Howard Hughes Corporation constructed and donated the boat house, which hosts kayak rentals along Lake Woodlands. Maintenance and care for the park is now under the purview of The Woodlands Township. The Lakes Edge Boat House proves the impact of small, simple projects that contribute to the quality of life in Our Region.

Lakes Edge Boat House connects residents and visitors to what The Woodlands is known for—nature.

*-The Woodlands
Development Company*



Healthy Communities



Boat house solar roof

Patrick's Bayou Detention Pond

City of Deer Park



Patrick's Bayou stormwater detention pond

Solutions to heavy flooding in Our Region sometimes require large infrastructure projects that can be burdensome in both cost and scope. For municipalities facing an urgent need for stormwater infrastructure, the options can appear daunting.

Over the past four decades, the City of Deer Park has searched for a large-scale solution to regular flooding during heavy rains. Past studies recommended drainage culverts under large petrochemical plants and into Buffalo Bayou, which elevated water contamination risks. Instead, the City of Deer Park decided to partner with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Harris County Flood Control District to acquire land and design a stormwater detention facility in the Patrick's Bayou watershed. Since its construction in 2014, no homes in that watershed have been flooded, increasing the resilience of Our Region.

This example of interagency cooperation can serve as a model for other communities in which the cost and scope of a project exceeds the resources of the local community.

-City of Deer Park



Resiliency



Construction teams excavating the spillway

Texas Emissions Reduction Plan Vehicle Recycling

Southern Core Recycling



Southern Core Recycling crew

Recycling is typically associated with small household goods, and we rarely consider the much larger objects with materials that can be repurposed for an even larger impact.

A local company, Southern Core Recycling (SCR), uses large and specialized machinery to deconstruct and recycle large vehicles like buses. SCR is one of the only designated, full-service scrap yards in Our Region that breaks down vehicle parts for reuse in other industries. This recycling takes place thanks to a grant from the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan, which allows SCR to purchase older equipment from large service providers like METRO in Harris County. These providers can then spend those funds to purchase safer and more energy-efficient fleets. As a result of the work of SCR, Our Region enjoys fewer greenhouse gas emissions while participating in the productive reuse of major equipment.

Grant recipients qualify their vehicles for end of life use which reduces greenhouse gas effects by helping them buy newer, more energy-efficient vehicles.

-Southern Core Recycling



Resiliency



Environment

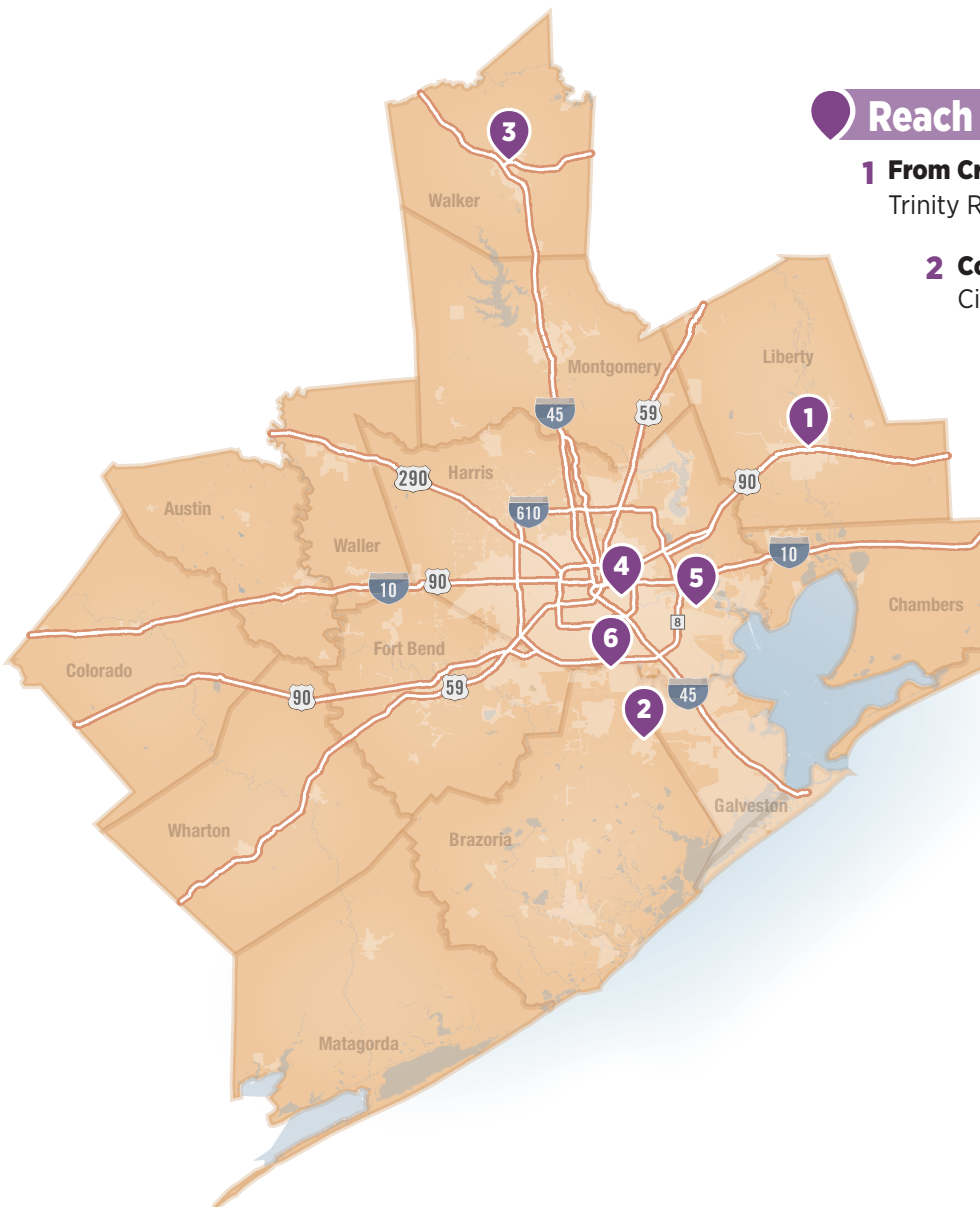


Vehicle in the recycling process

Reach Showcase

Our Great Region Awards 2016

The Reach Award honors a project that demonstrates exemplary public participation in advancing the Big Ideas of the *Our Great Region 2040* plan. Six organizations applied for the Reach Award in 2016, each prioritizing community outreach and engagement as a core tenet of a successful project. From volunteerism to data gathering, these organizations show how participation can bring a brighter future for Our Region.



Reach Award Applicants

1 From Crosswalks to Boardwalks Winner

Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge

2 Community Build

City of Alvin

3 Huntsville Wayfinding Signs

City of Huntsville

4 Neighborhood Detox: Enhancing Resilience in a Hazard Vulnerable Area

Texas A&M University

5 Type B Funded Parks Project

City of Deer Park

6 United for Kids Committee

Pearland Independent School District



From Crosswalks to Boardwalks

Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge



Volunteers clearing new trails

Large infrastructure projects can often seem daunting for smaller cities in Our Region, even when they enjoy public support from residents. Logistics, cost, staff time, and subject matter expertise present unique barriers depending on the project and the community.

The City of Liberty and the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge tackled the ambitious goal of connecting the city to the wildlife refuge, expanding amenities like hike and bike trails, benches, and signage in the process. Partners recognized a unique and valuable role for volunteers who offered recommendations from their hands-on interaction with the trails. This critical input expanded the original scope of the infrastructure and raised community awareness about the refuge.

Bringing the students out on the trails brought a different vitality aboard. Their sense of wonder and energy displayed that one or two trails would not be enough.

-Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge



Environment



Healthy Communities



Transportation



Accepting the 2016 Reach Award

Community Build

City of Alvin



Community Build volunteers

Civic action through volunteerism can be a major asset for local governments and non-profit organizations. Our Region is fortunate to have many residents who are willing and able to serve their communities by volunteering.

The City of Alvin mobilized more than 200 community members to get their hands dirty and contribute to the construction of new infrastructure. Through a partnership with the Thelma Ley Anderson Family YMCA, KaBoom! and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas, the City of Alvin built new playground facilities in Morgan Park. The success of the project relied heavily on community buy-in, both through community meetings to determine playground design and through the recruitment of hundreds of volunteers of all ages for a day of construction work. Thanks to the commitment of its residents, Alvin has expanded its slate of recreational amenities.

This project was built by the community for the youth of the community.

-City of Alvin



Healthy Communities



Community Build volunteer

Huntsville Wayfinding Signs

City of Huntsville



City of Huntsville wayfinding sign

Each community in Our Region contains unique elements that set it apart from other places. It is imperative that newcomers are able to easily discover and enjoy a community's distinct sense of place.

An award-winning comprehensive plan for the City of Huntsville has been put into action to help guide visitors and residents to the city's destinations through the placement of 30 wayfinding signs. The full process required thorough community engagement in the original planning process, oversight and input from a diverse set of local influential stakeholders, and a commitment to work with the Texas Department of Transportation for right-of-way access. The end result increases the ease of navigation throughout the city, adds to Huntsville's visual appeal, and fosters a growing sense of pride for residents.

Some local residents have even stated that they were not aware of some of the sites on the signs and have visited since.

-City of Huntsville



Economic Development



Transportation



Wayfinding sign in right-of-way

Neighborhood Detox: Enhancing Resilience in a Hazard Vulnerable Area

Texas A&M University Hazard Reduction & Recovery Center



Project site plan by Yangdi Wang and Galen Newman

Enhancing resilience in physically vulnerable areas and amongst socially vulnerable populations is most effective with participation from the local community.

-Texas A&M University

Neighborhoods with the highest risk for dangerous flooding from severe weather have recently received attention and resources that reduce flooding risk and spur investment.

The Hazard Reduction & Recovery Center at Texas A&M University worked with a neighborhood along Buffalo Bayou in Houston to develop a plan to strengthen its resilience against future flooding. The plan expands neighborhood green space seven-fold, introduces amenities like bikeways and basketball courts, and improves stormwater detention through low impact development techniques. The plan was developed through resident-led data collection that opened new insights into the state of the community and its short- and long- term needs. The final product gives the neighborhood and local leaders a road map for future improvements.



Environment



Healthy Communities

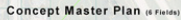


Resiliency



Neighborhood hydrological flow paths by Yangdi Wang and Galen Newman

City of Deer Park



With growing interest in expanding and maintaining green space and recreational facilities in Our Region, it is critical that community members share their ideas and direction.

Residents of the City of Deer Park voted in 2015 to use an increased sales tax to fund improvements and expansions of parks. Officials considered community engagement as the key factor in the success of the vote. Projects for the additional tax were selected based on feedback from residents and stakeholders through the Type B Recreation Committee and community meetings. As the projects now move into the implementation phase, stakeholder committees have been formed to oversee the work. The City of Deer Park's engagement process will help ensure success for all Type B projects on the foundation of community support.

-City of Deer Park



United for Kids Committee

Pearland Independent School District



United for Kids members wrapping presents

The future of Our Region relies on the success of students who will be tomorrow's leaders, voters, volunteers, and workers. Support for student success can come in many forms, from tutoring outside of the classroom to incentives for healthy food choices. Accordingly, comprehensive support requires a large and diverse band of organizations and individuals.

Pearland Independent School District recognized the importance of student support when it formed the United for Kids Committee. This open coalition of school district stakeholders, community organizations, churches, and other service providers meets to discuss challenges facing Pearland ISD students. The group pools their ideas and resources to respond to immediate needs and creates consensus on long-term solutions. The active engagement of United for Kids Committee membership embodies Our Region's commitment to nurturing an educated and skilled workforce.

United for Kids helps students outside the classroom so they can succeed inside it.

-Pearland Independent School District



Economic Development



Healthy Communities

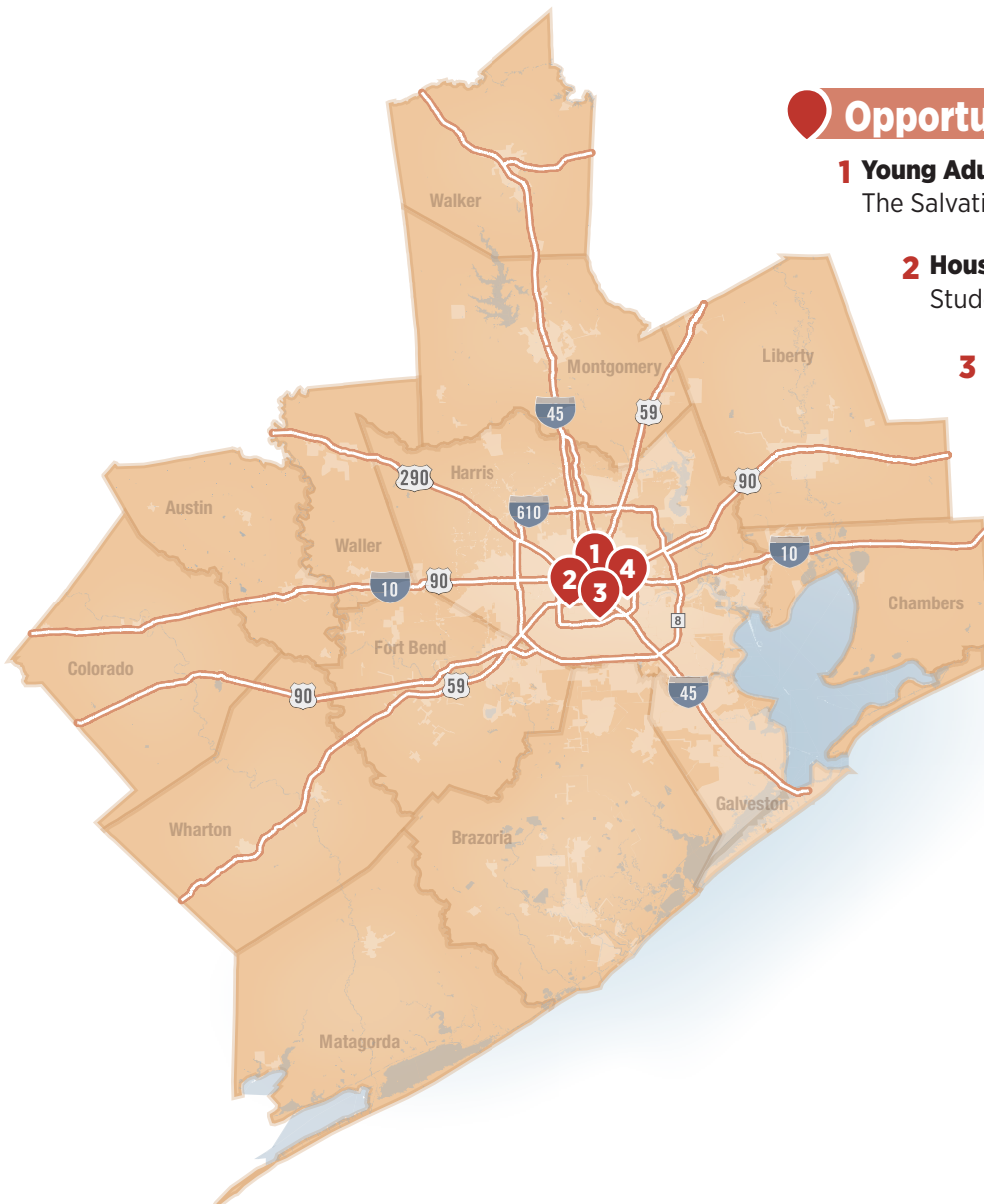


Christmas gifts for students

Opportunity Showcase

Our Great Region Awards 2016

The Opportunity Award honors a project that helps to overcome disparities in access to opportunity. Four organizations applied for the Opportunity Award in 2016. These projects embrace the notion that Our Region is only successful when all residents are successful. The four applicants break down barriers of entry into the regional economy and improve quality of life for all residents in Our Region.



Opportunity Award Applicants

- 1 Young Adult Resource Center Winner**
The Salvation Army
- 2 Houston Community Conservation Programs**
Student Conservation Association, Inc.
- 3 St. Charles Street Urban Community Garden**
ECOTONE World
- 4 SURE™ Program**
C.T. Bauer College of Business
at the University of Houston



Young Adult Resource Center

The Salvation Army



Staff and youth at the Young Adult Resource Center

For Our Region to thrive, all residents should have access to basic needs like food and housing. To accomplish this goal, we need willing organizations that can uplift community members on the road to self-sufficiency.

The Salvation Army in Houston builds this self-sufficiency at their Young Adult Resource Center (YARC) by focusing on the needs of homeless youth. YARC lays the foundation for success by providing on-demand and long-term housing support for young men and women without homes. In addition to housing, YARC offers supportive services like trauma counseling and healthcare and arranges paid internships for homeless youth to help them build financial strength and grow workforce skills. By going the extra mile, The Salvation Army serves as a stepping stone for these youth to become contributing and productive community members in Our Region.

Young Adult Resource Center clients are less likely than their unhoused, disengaged peers to be involved in law enforcement incidents, emergency room care, or chronic substance abuse.

-The Salvation Army



Housing



Economic Development



Healthy Communities



Accepting the 2016 Opportunity Award

Houston Community Conservation Programs

Student Conservation Association, Inc.



SCA working in a community garden

Our Region is graced with bayous that cross communities on the way to the Gulf of Mexico and wetlands that host a rich biodiversity of plants and animals. These natural assets make Our Region unique and must be maintained for future generations to enjoy.

To instill a sense of pride and stewardship among young men and women in Our Region, the Student Conservation Association, Inc. (SCA) provides seasonal employment for students interested in conservation careers. Student participants get their hands dirty by beautifying and preserving Our Region's natural environment. Throughout their employment, students gain sector-specific job training, on-the-ground exposure to local conservation techniques, and connections to a network of organizations and professionals working on issues of environmental health and resiliency. The SCA and its Houston area chapter support the critical education of local youth while nourishing the natural spaces that enhance quality of life.

SCA introduces its members to the rapidly growing green jobs economic sector and provides an intensive environmental education curriculum and activities teaching them about the real-world context of their work.

-Student Conservation Association, Inc.



Economic Development



Healthy Communities



Environment



SCA 2016 summer crew

St. Charles Street Urban Community Garden

ECOTONE World



Resident tending the vegetable garden

Many areas of Our Region are food deserts, lacking access to fresh and healthy foods.

In Houston's Third Ward neighborhood, local residents have partnered with ECOTONE World to convert one of the community's vacant lots into a prolific garden. The St. Charles Street Urban Community Garden was once an abandoned property, offering no use to residents. Now, the lot has been put to productive use. Not only does the garden produce fruits and vegetables for the neighborhood, but it also offers an engaging place for recreation and encourages cross-generational mentorship. ECOTONE World promotes hands-on educational opportunities for residents who want to learn to grow their own food. Through the creation of this garden, ECOTONE World and the residents of the Third Ward have turned a neighborhood deficit into a model for building healthy and resilient communities in Our Region.

This project exemplifies a pathway to support community resilience while empowering people to take action and impact their own quality of life.

-Chef Tarsha Gary,
Founder of ECOTONE World



Healthy Communities



SURE™ Program

C.T. Bauer College of Business at The University of Houston



SURE™ participants in the classroom

Our Region boasts a wide range of businesses, all of which contribute to economic strength and diversity. As the local and national economy continues to evolve, it is critically important to provide a robust support system for new businesses to thrive.

At the University of Houston C.T. Bauer College of Business, entrepreneurs from underrepresented communities can find resources and mentorship opportunities through the SURE™ (Stimulating Urban Renewal through Entrepreneurship) Program. SURE™ connects its participants to University of Houston students and business executives who share their education and expertise. The three-way program offers a leg-up for participants, hands-on practice for students, and prestige for professionals who take time to give back to their community. The SURE™ Program demonstrates the possibilities when local institutions mobilize their resources to support economic development for all residents.

The SURE™ Program seeks to embody the vision: experiential education engendering economic empowerment.

-SURE™ Program



Economic Development

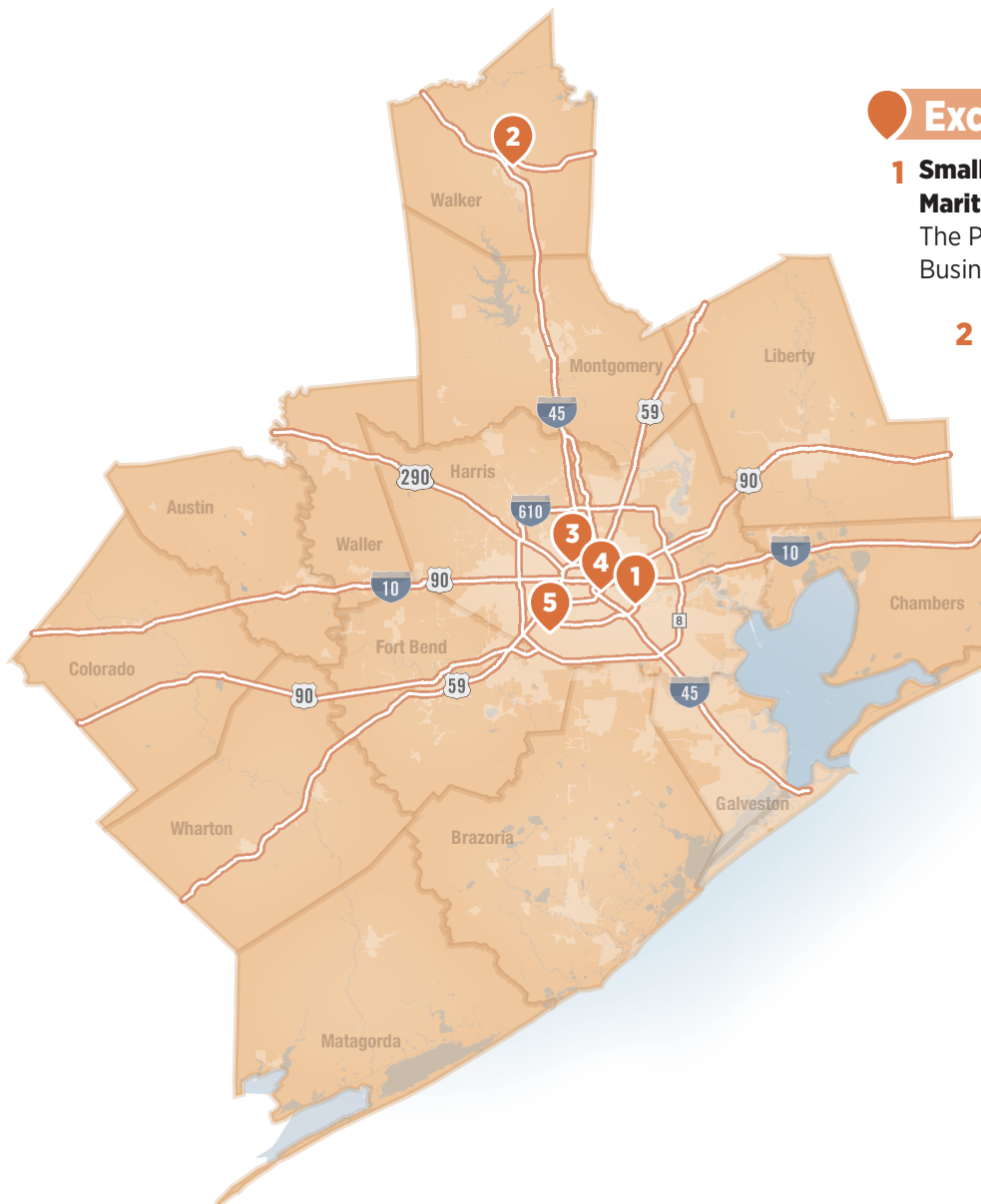


Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner speaking at graduation

Excellence Showcase

Our Great Region Awards 2016

The Excellence Award is the highest honor bestowed in the Our Great Region Awards and recognizes a project that, overall, best advances the vision of the *Our Great Region 2040* plan. Five groups applied in the Excellence category, each demonstrating the ingenuity and strategic focus that is required to bring about a brighter future for Our Region.



Excellence Award Applicants

- 1 Small Business Development and Maritime Education Programs Winner**
The Port of Houston Authority Small Business & Education Outreach
- 2 Diverting C&D Waste into Housing**
The Phoenix Commotion, Inc.
- 3 Healthy, Prepared Communities**
Southeast Texas Regional Advisory Council
- 4 METRO System Reimagining**
Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County
- 5 Working on Westbury**
Westbury Civic Club, Inc.



Small Business Development and Maritime Education Programs

The Port of Houston Authority Small Business & Education Outreach



Maritime Education Program classroom

Our Region is home to the 13th busiest port in the world and serves as a hub for international trade. The Port of Houston Authority oversees the port's day-to-day functions and relies on a skilled workforce and competent contractors.

To ensure a steady supply of workers and contractors, the Port of Houston Authority takes training and small business support into its own hands through its Small Business Development (SBDP) and Maritime Education Programs (MEP). The SBDP orients local businesses to the port's procurement process and maintains a contracting preference for businesses that complete the program. The MEP offers a range of initiatives—workshops, classes, and direct partnerships with high schools and colleges—to train students for future positions in the maritime industry. Both of these programs demonstrate the benefit of investments in people and small business that make Our Region thrive.

The Maritime Education Program provides alternative pathways to a livable wage and sustainable lifestyle and future for both inner city students and those within the surrounding schools.

-The Port of Houston Authority



Economic Development



Transportation



Accepting the 2016 Excellence Award

Diverting C&D Waste into Housing

The Phoenix Commotion, Inc.



Building made from repurposed materials

The Phoenix Commotion, Inc. not only builds new homes with character, the company has also made a name for itself through intensive recycling and reuse of materials for its projects. In particular, the Phoenix Commotion continues to make its mark in Huntsville, where the group has given both construction materials and neighborhoods a second life through the construction of new homes. Their projects reinvigorate under-resourced communities and expand opportunities for unskilled workers through paid apprenticeships.

The multi-focus operations of Phoenix Commotion—embracing workforce training, environmental responsibility, and neighborhood revitalization—make it a model for other projects across Our Region.

A future community goal is a community that does not need a landfill.

-The Phoenix Commotion, Inc.



Housing



Economic Development



Environment



Victorian home made from recycled C&D waste

Healthy, Prepared Communities

SouthEast Texas Regional Advisory Council



Stop the Bleed class by SETRAC

Our Region enjoys a world-class medical center and a robust system of area providers that address healthcare needs. Much like local governments, these providers must be prepared in the event of individual and population-level health crises.

Whether it be from an acute health event to a region-wide epidemic, the SouthEast Texas Regional Advisory Council (SETRAC) prepares local healthcare institutions with the necessary training and equipment to respond to Our Region's health needs. Over the past few years, SETRAC has implemented training to enhance immediate care for stroke victims, reduce the risk for injurious falls, increase knowledge about severe bleeding control, and strategically plan for a hypothetical Ebola outbreak. This knowledge infrastructure, maintained by SETRAC and their partners, keeps Our Region prepared.

The healthcare community has an abundance of selfless people who have high regard for healthy communities and will risk their own lives in order to minimize the threat of a large scale adverse event.

-SouthEast Texas Regional Advisory Council



Healthy Communities



Resiliency



Instructor demonstrating tourniquet use

METRO System Reimagining

Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County



Residents brainstorming METRO changes

Public transit systems are judged by their ability to efficiently move people from one destination to the next. In a place as large as Harris County, arranging bus and rail lines in an efficient way is no small task. It requires an in-depth knowledge of the county's housing, employment, shopping, and recreation nodes, as well as an intimate understanding of ridership and system capacity.

In 2014, the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) made a commitment to reconfiguring its system of bus routes, which had been static for three decades. This reimagining process saved money by sketching new lines based on existing service infrastructure, improved the on-time performance, and boosted ridership both for weekday and weekend trips. METRO showed that persistence and ingenuity go far when confronting some of Our Region's major challenges.

Every time an individual experiences the satisfaction of seeing their ideas shape a public outcome becomes a powerful incentive to engage in the future.

-Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County



Economic Development



Transportation



Healthy Communities



Resiliency



Resident offering input during reimagining

Working on Westbury

Westbury Civic Club, Inc.



Volunteers at the Great American Cleanup

The act of beautifying a neighborhood can spark a sense of pride in residents that is worth the elbow grease.

One local organization, the Westbury Civic Club, Inc., has fully embraced community ownership of green space maintenance in their neighborhood. After an initial workshop on tree planting and maintenance, residents of the neighborhood were inspired to continue in their civic duty and created Working on Westbury to beautify the esplanades and park space in their community. Once it started, Working on Westbury gained momentum and has created a sense of pride and a vehicle for connection among neighbors. This initiative demonstrates the impact that a small group of residents can have on Our Region.

The secret sauce of success was that building a sense of pride and community kept building more and more pride and sense of community.

-Westbury Civic Club, Inc.



Healthy Communities



Volunteers planting new garden beds

A Great 2016 and Beyond

Our Great Region Awards 2016 Showcase

The inaugural year for the Our Great Region Awards demonstrated the wealth of local work underway and completed in Our Region. At the Houston-Galveston Area Council, we applaud the work of the organizations who applied in 2016 and look forward to celebrating similar accomplishments in the years to come. We encourage anyone with an inspiring story of Connection, Diligence, Reach, Opportunity, or Excellence to consider applying for an Our Great Region Award in 2017.

For more information about the Our Great Region Awards and to apply in 2017, please visit www.ograwards.org.



2016 Our Great Region Award winners

Panel of Judges

Our Great Region Awards 2016 Showcase

H-GAC would like to thank the expert panel of judges for evaluating the 2016 Our Great Region Awards. Their unique perspectives and meaningful insights contributed to the success of this inaugural awards program.

Beau Fraga *BakerRipley, formerly Neighborhood Centers, Inc.*

Lisa Harrison *Trull Foundation*

Deborah January-Bevers *Houston Wilderness*

Dr. Carol Lewis *Texas Southern University*

Elizabeth Love *Houston Endowment*

Kelly Violette *Tomball Economic Development Corporation*

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