

# Our Great Region 2040 Summary

## Our Great Region 2040

*Our Great Region 2040* is a high-level plan whose aim is for Our Region to be one of the world's greatest places to live, work, and succeed, as defined by measurable goals, by the year 2040.

It is the result of the efforts of hundreds of organizations and thousands of people from across H-GAC's 13-county service area.

It is based on research, analysis, and extensive public input, along with the knowledge and expertise of local leaders from the public, private, and non-profit sectors, spanning Our Region's urban, suburban, rural, and coastal areas.

Its recommendations build on many successful local initiatives, as well as new ideas generated during the plan's development. Some entail regional collaboration; others can be pursued by local communities, now, or in the future. All are entirely voluntary; so the success of this plan will be up to us.

*Our Great Region 2040* offers a road map to make sure we are a great region in 2040, including the following Big Ideas:

- Strengthening our economic competitiveness through an educated and skilled workforce
- Securing a clean and ample water supply
- Cultivating places where people can lead active, healthy lives
- Providing balanced housing choices near jobs, services, and transportation options
- Achieving a world-class transportation network
- Increasing our resiliency to disaster and a changing environment

Hitting these marks will require a concerted effort, including efficient public investments and stewardship of tax payer dollars, an engaged private sector, and the active participation of community-based organizations and individuals that reflect the diverse voices of Our Region.

## Economic Development

A strong economy not only means having diverse, good-paying jobs, but also being able to attract new types of employment that will keep Our Region competitive and thriving, providing more opportunities for all to prosper. This section provides strategies on how Our Region can maintain a **competitive economy**, support **thriving businesses**, and develop a **prepared workforce**.

### THE BIG IDEA

To be a great region in 2040, we should strengthen our economic competitiveness through an educated and skilled workforce.

### HOW?

- Improve the opportunities for lifelong learning by scaling up efforts, from quality early childhood education to GED and community education programs to skills training for seniors.
- Expand programs to improve job and financial skills and promote self sufficiency.

# Our Great Region 2040 Summary

- Increase availability of information on job skills needed by employers to educational institutions allowing them to better tailor their course and training offerings.
- Promote business attraction and retention efforts through multi-jurisdictional coordination and financial incentives.
- Increase availability of high speed data connections and broadband Internet across the region, especially in rural areas.

Institute a “buy local, made local, grow local” campaign to support local businesses.

## Environment

Our Region’s 16,000 miles of waterways and coastlines, along with our 3,000 parks and natural areas, are among our greatest assets. Having clean air, water, and outdoor recreational opportunities will be crucial to Our Region’s future health, quality of life, and economic vitality. This section provides strategies on how Our Region can help **protect the quality of the environment**, improve how Our Region **manages resources**, and increase awareness of the **value of ecological benefits**.

### THE BIG IDEA

To be a great region in 2040, we should secure a clean and ample water supply.

### HOW?

- Work together on long term structural solutions to increase water storage and distribution capacity.
- Create watershed protection plans to protect recharge zones and water sources, as well as riparian and wetland buffer areas.
- Establish alliances to coordinate water conservation and protection efforts across Our Region, including sharing data and best practices, developing financial incentives, and implementing public awareness programs.
- Increase awareness of the economic benefits of environmental systems.
- Conserve natural assets through multi-benefit green infrastructure projects and designing with nature, such as Low Impact Development and expanding Our Region’s network of greenways along bayous.
- Develop a regional plan to conserve high quality natural areas.
- Promote efficient resource management, including energy, solid waste, and water.

## Healthy Communities

Our Region is home to a world-class medical center, but we also surpass national rates for many preventable diseases. This section provides strategies on how Our Region can promote **healthy lifestyles**, increase **access to healthy foods**, and improve **access to care**.

# Our Great Region 2040 Summary

## THE BIG IDEA

To be a great region in 2040, we should cultivate places where people can lead active, healthy lives.

## HOW?

- Establish regional infrastructure and distribution mechanisms to support farmers markets, local agriculture, and other means to provide fresh, healthy food to residents across Our Region.
- Increase current funding and identify innovative funding sources to develop and maintain sidewalks, bikeways, bikeshare infrastructure, and parks/open space that promote a more active lifestyle.
- Create a regional task force that works across multiple disciplines (health departments, public safety) to address mental health issues.
- Foster life-long neighborhoods that put an emphasis on health, incorporating elements that promote active living, social interaction, and healthy eating.
- Identify and promote existing and emerging community resources for mental health services.
- Expand availability of community health services and trauma care, particularly in low-income and rural areas.

## Housing

Everyone in the region should have the opportunity to have safe and healthy housing choices that offer access to opportunities and amenities. This section provides strategies on how Our Region can help support a thriving **housing market**, provide **housing choices** to meet diverse needs, and provide **quality housing** that is both safe and healthy.

## THE BIG IDEA

To be a great region in 2040, we should provide balanced housing choices near jobs, services, and transportation options.

## HOW?

- Develop local housing plans to accommodate future growth.
- Provide financial incentives, such as tax foreclosure property programs or property lien dismissals, for developers to build diverse housing types near jobs, transit centers, and services, including mixed-use developments and housing that has a variety of price points.
- Develop incentives and a toolkit for matching and maintaining local housing stock to meet economic development needs, bringing greater access to opportunities.
- Identify gaps and opportunities of the quality and supply of the regional housing stock, including housing for seniors or aging in place.
- Develop and enforce local housing codes and standards to ensure owner-occupied and rental housing is safe and healthy.

# Our Great Region 2040 Summary

## Transportation

Whether it's moving people or goods, an efficient transportation system is an essential part of how well we live our daily lives. This section provides strategies on how Our Region can help maintain an **efficient network**, increase **transportation choices**, and improve **planning and coordination**.

### THE BIG IDEA

To be a great region in 2040, we should achieve a world-class transportation network.

### HOW?

- Improve the efficiency of freight movement by investing in projects that improve connections between ships, trains, and trucks.
- Optimize existing transportation network through a 'Fix it First' strategy by using technology and improved incident management to maximize system capacity.
- Create a regional framework for expanding transit across Our Region.
- Develop and implement policies to improve transit, pedestrian, and bicycle access between and within activity centers, connecting residents to job centers.
- Provide counties with tools to better coordinate land use and transportation planning in unincorporated areas.
- Include economic, safety, and quality of life costs and benefits of transportation projects in funding prioritizations.

## Resiliency

Our Region has a strong tradition of fortitude in the face of adversity, bouncing back stronger from natural and man-made disasters. This section provides strategies on how Our Region can better **prepare** for future events, **adapt** to changing conditions, and **recover** when events do occur.

### THE BIG IDEA

To be a great region in 2040, we should increase our resiliency to disaster and a changing environment.

### HOW?

Develop an integrated regional storm defense system, which includes both structural and non-structural elements.

Develop a rapid recovery plan to help people and businesses return as quickly as possible.

Reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions by offering alternative modes of transportation, improving energy efficiency, and effectively managing resources.

Support innovative adaptation strategies that help communities prepare for potential environmental changes, such as severe weather events and sea level rise.

Create education programs on wildfire, flooding, drought, and other risks.

# Our Great Region 2040 Summary

## Call to Action

Do you have comments on any aspect of *Our Great Region 2040*?

Do you see a Big Idea or strategy that is a priority for your community?

Are you a representative for an organization that would like to partner on moving a strategy forward?

Would you like to pledge your support for *Our Great Region 2040*?

Let us know. Please visit [www.ourregion.org](http://www.ourregion.org) or submit comments at [ourregion@h-gac.com](mailto:ourregion@h-gac.com)