

Fair Housing Equity Assessment

Background

The Fair Housing Equity Assessment (FHEA) identifies baseline conditions for fair housing, equity, and opportunity across the region, informs deliberations of the Coordinating Committee, and informs the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD). H-GAC will draw upon the expertise of three groups throughout the FHEA process: BBC Research & Consulting (BBC), the local Fair Housing and Equity Workgroup (FHEW), and the Kirwan Institute. The FHEW includes several local governments with housing programs, non-profits and fair housing and equity advocacy groups from across all transects. While the work is regional in nature, specific analyses will be conducted at the county and municipal level for the jurisdictions distributed across the urban, suburban, and rural typologies.

Responsibilities of FHEA contributors:

- H-GAC: Coordinator of other three parties, government liaison, writing of final FHEA
 - BBC: Data analysis, best practices, indices, capacity building
 - FHEW: local input, local context
 - Kirwan: opportunity mapping

The FHEA examines the following components across typology and geography:

- Assessment of Primary Demographic Concerns
- Indicators and Disparities in Access to Opportunity
- Fair Housing Landscape – Fair Housing Activities and Fair Housing Infrastructure
- Physical Infrastructure/Economic Investments

The final product will be a document that provides data and analysis concerning potential fair housing and equity issues, examines the current fair housing and equity landscape, and presents best practices and recommendations that could be useful to communities within the region. H-GAC will present findings in context with geographic settings and community size.

Current Situation: During the first quarter of 2013, H-GAC began working with BBC in examining data related to concentrations of race/ethnicity and poverty, access to opportunity, and community assets and challenges. In March 2013, the FHEW held its third meeting, which doubled as a focus group for the RPSD draft strategies. H-GAC received a draft report and opportunity mapping data from the Kirwan Institute in April, which incorporated feedback from the FHEW and provided a summary of the one on one interviews conducted in late 2012. In May, the FHEW held its fourth meeting which included a presentation by BBC on race/ethnicity and poverty analysis, opportunity modeling, and the regional fair housing landscape. H-GAC then collected feedback from the FHEW and provided it to BBC in order to inform the development of best practices and recommendations in their report. In June, the FHEW held its fifth meeting, where BBC presented on best practices and recommendations for the region.

Next Steps: FHEA data, maps and analyses, meeting agendas and the workgroup roster will be posted on the OurRegion website during June/July 2013. Based on H-GAC and FHEW feedback, BBC will make necessary edits and finalize their report. H-GAC will work on assembling and writing the FHEA document, as well as integrating the FHEA into the larger RPSD.

Recommended Action: Information only, no action needed.

Public Outreach

Phase Four Outreach Update:

Phase four outreach was focused on regional experts to help refine the strategies for the regional plan. H-GAC Staff conducted focus groups in all 13 counties late spring and invited 1625 individuals to participate in discussions surrounding the strategies with an estimated 118 participants in the live sessions and we are continuing to have participation via an online survey. In addition staff met with 15 advisory committees with H-GAC an estimated 421 individuals.

As the strategies are continuing to be refined staff is reaching out to individuals throughout June into July.

ACTION: Information only, no action needed.

Phase Five Planning Update:

Phase Five of the public outreach will be an environment where all attendees have opportunities to participate, ask questions, and provide plan input. These sessions will be open house in style and will present information on the major regional and local strategies identified in the plan. The format and content is in the development stage.

ACTION: Information only, no action needed.

OurRegion Video Production:

Six area focused videos had been completed. A two new element is being added to enhance the usage of the overall videos - a voiceover in the beginning and an action segment to the end. Each video shows sustainable projects happening in our region.

It has been determined the videos should be launched in conjunction with the draft plan as part of a full media release. Once the additional elements are added to the videos they will be prepped for distribution this fall. A schedule for the release will be determined as we get a final release date on the draft plan.

ACTION: Information only, no action needed.

Community Resource Guide:

The consultant team is working to produce a Community Resource Guide to help community members better understand how to navigate participation in their communities. This document is in a development and layout stage and is set to be completed in the fall of 2013 to be released in conjunction of the draft regional plan. We anticipate seeing a draft product by the end of June. This draft product will consist of a paper/PDF version as well as design for an online version. This is an ongoing project and is in a draft stage.

Recommended Action: Information only, no action needed.

Case Studies

Background

In July 2012, H-GAC and its Coordinating Committee released a call for proposals in which eligible entities could apply for funding of a sustainability case study. The purpose of the case studies is to demonstrate ways that the sustainability goals developed in the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development (RPSD) can be applied to issues at the local level and in a variety of geographic contexts. The case studies are intended to focus on implementation, moving beyond the planning level of the broader RPSD. It is expected that a broad range of communities will be able to utilize the recommendations and outcome(s) of the case study(s) if they share a similar geographic context or issues.

Each applicant had to demonstrate how their proposal met specific criteria. The criteria included demonstration of how the proposal aligned with the 15 RPSD goals and the six HUD Livability Principles. In addition, applicants had to describe how their project would serve as a transferable model for other entities. A panel of reviewers made up of the Coordinating Committee and H-GAC evaluated and scored the proposals. The proposals with the highest scores were chosen. Out of 18 applications, six were chosen. Five of the case studies were approved by the H-GAC Board of Directors on September 19, 2012 and the Bayou Greenway Initiative Case Study was approved on November 20, 2012. All of the case studies were completed by June 2013. All of the studies can be found online at <http://www.ourregion.org/casestudies.html>.

1. Bay City North Downtown Plan:

Bay City is a rural community of about 17,500 people two hours southwest of Houston. The study focuses on the creation of a revitalization plan for an area filled with vacant lots and brownfields north of its historic downtown. The plan focuses on the creation of quality mixed use development with a variety of available housing types to attract young professionals and needed jobs in the area, as well connections from the study area to its downtown.

Study Outcomes:

- The final case study document outlines a community vision for a high-quality mixed-use housing district that complements the commercial and civic activity of Downtown Bay City.
- The case study also includes a housing market analysis which examines housing trends and local demand; the analysis indicated a modest demand for: upscale single-family housing; small increments of small-lot single-family homes (i.e. townhomes, patio homes); upscale apartments; and moderate-sized, market-rate apartment complexes.
- A four phased master plan for the study area was produced based on sequencing of private and public investments.

2. Bayou Greenway Initiative

The Bayou Greenway Initiative (BGI) Case Study will develop a mechanism to implement the segments of the BGI that are outside the limits of the City of Houston. The scope of the project will be limited to Cypress Creek from its confluence with Spring Creek to US 290 in Northwest Harris County. A major component of the case study will be developing the mechanisms for coordinating with the various jurisdictions along the corridors to help ensure continuity of the BGI. The mechanisms may include guidelines, funding recommendations, and development of Memorandum of Understanding or Memorandum of Agreements (MOU/MOA).

Study Outcomes:

- The final report was completed and an ongoing stakeholder group and organizational structure was established.
- 18 resolutions were secured from municipal utility districts along the Cypress Creek Greenway to continue the efforts and dialogue of designing and implementing the greenway.
- Recommendations include actively seeking implementation partners, engaging in an ongoing awareness campaign, developing a corporate partnering effort, and creating a fundraising vehicle.

3. Brazoria County

The study examines the entire coastal ecosystem of Brazoria County which includes several bays and estuaries of the Gulf of Mexico as well as the areas 20 miles of land inland from shore. The county seeks to develop a coastal master plan that includes a new set of Best Management Practices to handle and protect the coastal natural resources. The master plan will also include specific policy and planning recommendations to mitigate short and long-term impacts of future development in the coastal community.

Study Outcomes:

- The plan was completed by the end of April and contains four sections: parks inventory, needs assessment, physical parameters affecting public lands, and parks and land management recommendations.
- The goal of the plan is to enhance recreational and economic health through environmental conservation by developing a new set of best management practices to handle and protect the coastal natural resources.
- The plan includes information about eco-geomorphology in Brazoria County (how the eco landscape has changed over the years due to sea level change and what can be done

to prevent further loss of sensitive lands and habitat) and explains the unique natural environmental characteristics that are exclusive to the region.

4. Galveston: Sustainable Return of Investment (SROI) Calculator:

The purpose of the study is to develop a Sustainable Return on Investment (SROI) framework that would act as a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis methodology for proposed city investments and initiatives. The SROI framework would provide a more accurate assessment of the costs and benefits of proposed investments by integrating their social and environmental impacts into the traditional financial analysis methodology. The SROI will be performed on three projects: curb-side recycling by either the city or a private entity; water conservation and grey water re-use; and implementing complete streets principals on a roadway segment. In addition to the SROI analysis will be completed on these projects, an excel-based model will be developed so that other communities may complete SROI on their own similar projects.

Study Outcomes:

- The final report and SROI model online tool is completed.
- The study examined three sustainability projects:
 - a proposed Galveston recycling program which had a positive SROI;
 - the 2013 Galveston Livable Centers study streetscape and safety recommendations which had a nearly break-even SROI; and
 - a water re-use system scenario which had a negative SROI.
- The SROI model online tool can be used by other local governments in order to evaluate sustainable outcomes of similar projects in their communities.

5. Houston: Framework for Urban Development

The scope for this case study encompasses the City of Houston's corporate limits which includes both urban and suburban areas. The city faces several issues including urban sprawl, low density, and lack of pedestrian safety. The purpose of the study is to develop a comprehensive framework of policy tools and regulatory incentives the city can use to selectively encourage dense, sustainable neighborhoods in appropriate locations, while maintaining the character of existing neighborhoods. The case study will help integrate land use and transportation planning by coordinating land development standards with new transit investments, and by providing affordable housing in dense areas around new transit lines.

Study Outcomes:

- The final report was completed and submitted to H-GAC and the City of Houston at the end of May.

- The framework will serve as the first of many phases in developing a comprehensive set of regulatory tools and incentives that the City of Houston can use to encourage more sustainable development patterns.
- The tools identified in the framework may also be used by other communities in the region to encourage sustainable development patterns without mandating additional development requirements or zoning.

6. Huntsville: Harnessing Huntsville's Potential

Huntsville is a rural city of roughly 30,000 people that has a jobs and housing imbalance and is seeking to comprehensively address the ability to create and maintain quality, affordability, and a range of housing options while subsequently attracting economic development. Currently the city contains a large renter population as well as a large amount of public land that is owned by the federal and state governments. The long term benefits of the study include positive branding, improvement of the housing stock, the increasing and diversification of the labor pool market, and the increasing and promotion of business expansion and development for the city.

Study Outcomes:

- The final report was completed in May
- The study outlined a list of prioritized quality of life projects and initiatives the City of Huntsville can implement in order to make it a more attractive place for people to live and businesses to locate.
- The study is expected to be adopted at the June City Council meeting.

Recommended Action: Information only, no action needed.