

great
ourregion

2017 Awards Showcase

Connection . Diligence . Reach . Opportunity . Excellence



This document was produced by the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), the voluntary association of local governments in the 13-county Gulf Coast planning region of Texas. H-GAC also serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the eight-county Houston-Galveston area.

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 projects featured by the Our Great Region Awards Showcase are the winners of the 2017 awards. They offer effective solutions and new opportunities for a wide array of Our Region's challenges. This document showcases the work of these award-winning groups 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 2017

Truly representative of the *Our Great Region 2040* plan, the 2017 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.



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



The **Diligence Award** honors a project that executed a creative and persistent approach to overcome challenges to implementation and demonstrates the importance of innovation and follow-through in the pursuit of inspiring projects throughout Our Region.



The **Reach Award** honors a project that demonstrates exemplary public participation and prioritizes community outreach and engagement as a core tenet of a successful project.



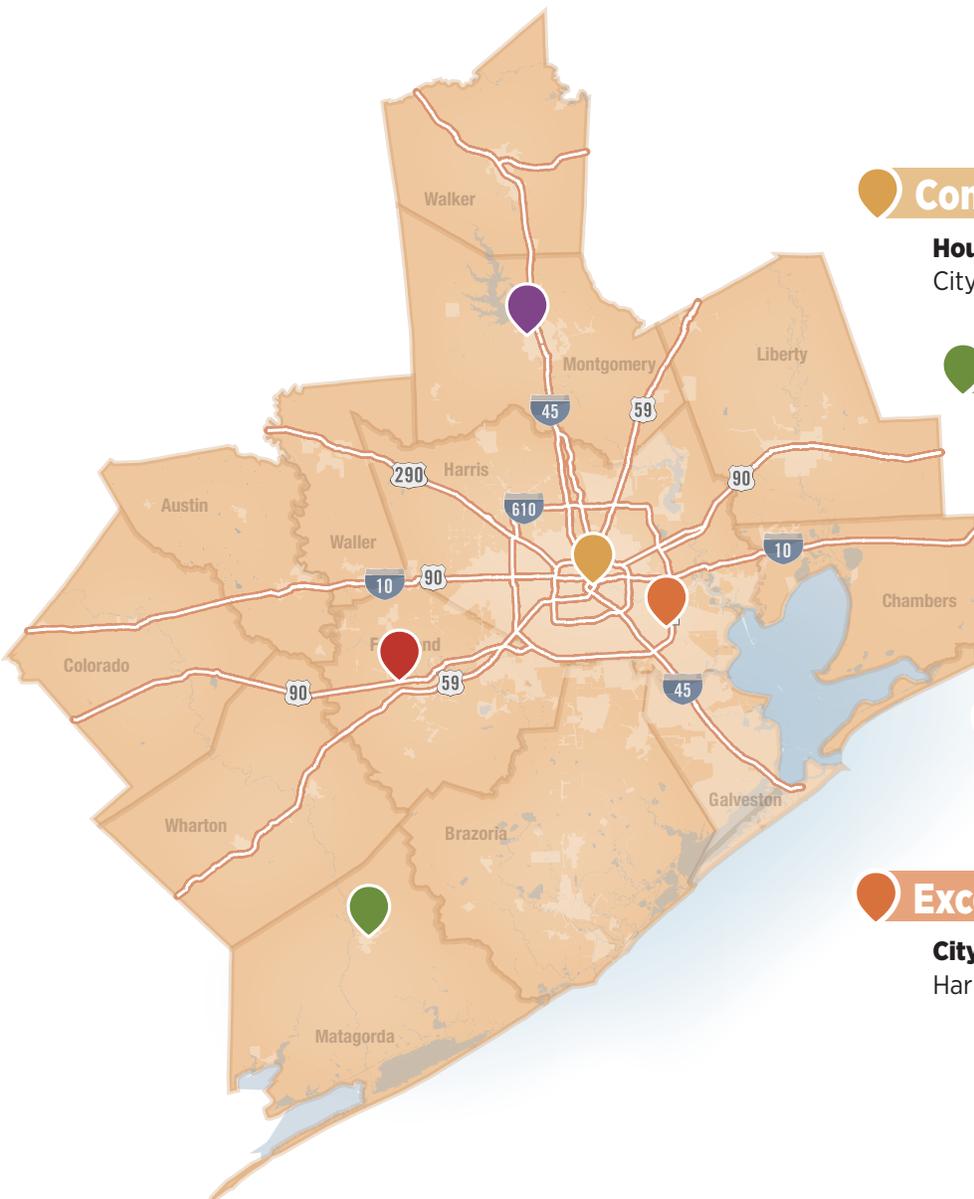
The **Opportunity Award** honors a project that helps overcome disparities in access to opportunity, breaks down barriers of entry into the regional economy, and improves quality of life for all residents in Our Region.



The **Excellence Award** is the highest honor bestowed by the Our Great Region Awards and honors a project that best advances the vision of the *Our Great Region 2040* plan. The project demonstrates the ingenuity and strategic focus that is required for a brighter future for Our Region.

2017 Winners

Our Great Region Awards 2017



Connection Award Winner

Houston Bike Plan
City of Houston

Diligence Award Winner

Bay City North Downtown Plan
Bay City Community Development Corporation

Reach Award Winner

Defined Irrigation Schedule
The Woodlands Joint Powers Agency

Opportunity Award Winner

Seabourne Creek Park Nature Center
Rosenberg Parks and Recreation

Excellence Award Winner

City of Pasadena Safe Routes to School Initiative
Harris County Public Health

Houston Bike Plan

City of Houston



City of Houston staff host a ride for community members

Coordination is key when envisioning city-wide infrastructure, like a bike network. As a city of more than 600 square miles, the challenge becomes even greater for a place like Houston.

The City of Houston and its partners tackled the challenge, taking stock of existing barriers to a complete cycling network and offering a comprehensive toolbox for projects, policies, and programs that improve the rate and safety of cycling in Houston. The City of Houston spearheaded the planning process, with consultants providing technical expertise, and Bike Houston focusing on engagement and advocacy. As a result of their coordinated efforts, the first Houston *Bike Plan* was adopted in 2017.

The *Bike Plan* provides a model for other groups across Our Region to combine resources and do more than one entity can alone.

-Traffic Engineers, Inc.



Transportation



Healthy Communities



Resiliency



Bike Plan supporters gather at Houston City Hall

Bay City North Downtown Plan

Bay City Community Development Corporation



Workers install brick pavers in north downtown

Once a plan is finalized and printed, the difficult task of implementation begins. Keeping a plan off the shelf to bring its vision to reality requires persistence.

The Bay City Community Development Corporation (CDC) made significant progress on the aspirations outlined in their *Bay City North Downtown Plan*. The plan set out to create an active, mixed-use district with a range of high-quality housing options adjacent to the historic Bay City downtown and local businesses. With ongoing relationship-building and a steadfast commitment to the plan goals, the Bay City CDC created a financing mechanism to increase infrastructure improvements downtown, hired a contractor to renovate an historic building into loft-style apartments, and started construction on a variety of housing types that complement Bay City's character.

The project is still in its early stages but has shown the community that the downtown area can be a very viable and unique place to live, play, and shop.

-Bay City Community Development Corp.



Environment



Healthy Communities



Housing



The Chamber of Commerce breaks ground on new housing



Defined Irrigation Schedule

The Woodlands Joint Powers Agency



Flowers grow in a well-irrigated yard in The Woodlands

Public participation is often cited as the foundation for successful planning projects. The Woodlands Joint Powers Agency demonstrates that community organizations can work together to provide a meaningful participation process.

The Agency is working to reduce water usage throughout the township. Public participation included email campaigns, community speakers, rebate programs, and programs at senior centers and churches. Through this participation, the Agency built community awareness about the importance of reducing water usage. From this initiative, the community has achieved a 30% savings in single-family residential usage, despite a 3% annual population growth since 2009.

The project has a number of moving parts, all designed to inform, educate, and create a community advocacy program.

-The Woodlands Joint Powers Agency



Environment



Healthy Communities



Resiliency





Seabourne Creek Park Nature Center

Rosenberg Parks and Recreation



The proposed nature center will sit on preserved land

Our Region has made strides to protect natural open spaces to increase resiliency to natural disasters and to ensure unique spaces for future generations.

Rosenberg has created an opportunity for all residents to learn about these natural systems through a new park center. Working in collaboration with residents and organizations across the community, the Rosenberg Parks and Recreation Department developed a vision for a new center. It will include an educational space for visitors to interact with native flora and fauna, as well as a flexible classroom for use by local schools. The center will also have large porches and a pavilion to encourage visitors to go outside and explore a set of educational gardens and a nearby pond.

By enhancing the experience of the outdoors, this center will provide a place for children and guests of all ages to develop a passion for the natural world and understand the role of nature in our environment.

-Rosenberg Parks and Recreation



Environment



Healthy Communities



Resiliency



Existing Rosenberg parkland

City of Pasadena Safe Routes to School Initiative

Harris County Public Health



A child rides his bike in a Safe Routes to School event

Without access to safe sidewalks and bike lanes, residents do not have an outlet for exercise. Outside of infrastructure improvements on local streets, it takes creativity to expand access to active transportation options like walking and biking.

To encourage more activity, Harris County Public Health, along with partners in the City of Pasadena, organized the Safe Routes to School Program. Using strong partnerships and a clear vision, the program addresses the lack of safe, active transportation through workshops, events, donations, and promotion of infrastructure improvements that make the City of Pasadena safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Safe Routes to School initiative serves as an example for other communities that active partnerships are an effective way to create sustainable environmental and community level change.

-Harris County Public Health



Transportation



Healthy Communities



Staff offers a workshop on pedestrian infrastructure

A Great 2017 and Beyond

Our Great Region Awards 2017 Showcase

The Our Great Region Awards demonstrate 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 2017 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 2018.

For more information about the Our Great Region Awards and to apply in 2018, please visit www.ograwards.org.

Panel of Judges

H-GAC would like to thank the expert panel of judges for evaluating the 2017 Our Great Region Awards. Their unique perspectives and meaningful insights contributed to the success of this awards program.

- Sarah Benavides** *City of Pasadena*
Linda Head *Lone Star College System*
Irma Sanchez *Westchase Management District*
Ron Sanders *Wharton Chamber of Commerce*
Sheri Smith *Texas Southern University*

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