



HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 7, 2016

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H-GAC PRESENTS INAUGURAL OUR GREAT REGION AWARDS

Awards Recognize Outstanding Local Community Initiatives

The Houston-Galveston Area Council presented the first Our Great Region Awards in early December to recognize outstanding local projects that advance goals and strategies identified in the *Our Great Region 2040* plan.

More than 30 local governments and organizations submitted applications covering transportation, environment, economic development, resiliency, housing, and healthy communities. Each project demonstrates innovative quality work focused on building a more vibrant Gulf Coast region.

Seven awards were presented across five categories.

The **Excellence Award**, the highest honor, recognizes projects best advancing the vision of the *Our Great Region 2040 plan*.

- Port of Houston Authority for the Small Business Development Program and Maritime Education Program

The **Connection Award** honors projects that advance two or more of the *Our Great Region 2040 plan*'s strategies through innovative partnerships.

- Clear Lake City Water Authority for Exploration Green
- West Houston Association for the Greater West Houston Mobility Plan

The **Diligence Award** honors an implemented project that executed a creative and tenacious approach to overcome challenges to implementation.

- Houston Advanced Research Center for the Double Bayou Watershed Protection Plan
- Harris County Engineering Department for the Net-Zero Energy Restroom Prototype (Honorable Mention)

The **Opportunity Award** honors a project that helps to overcome disparities in access to opportunity.

- The Salvation Army for the Young Adult Resource Center

The **Reach Award** honors a project demonstrating exemplary public participation.

- Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge for the From Crosswalks to Boardwalks Initiative

Our Great Region 2040 is a high-level plan focused on making the Gulf Coast region a better place to live, work, and succeed, as defined by measurable goals, by the year 2040. More information about *Our Great Region 2040* is available at www.ourregion.org.



From left, *Connection Award*, John Branch, President, Clear Lake Water Authority; *Connection Award*, David Hightower, Past President, West Houston Association; *Diligence Award*, Stephanie Glenn, Program Director of Hydrology and Watersheds, Houston Advanced Research Center; *Diligence Award (honorable mention)*, Dennis Johnston, Harris County Precinct 4 Parks Director; *Opportunity Award*, Rafael Sarango, Young Adult Program Manager, Salvation Army; *Reach Award*, Laurie Lomas Gonzales, Wildlife Biologist, Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge; *Excellence Award*, Gilda Ramirez, Senior Director of Small Business & Education Outreach, Port of Houston Authority.

Houston-Galveston Area Council

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (www.h-gac.com) is a voluntary association of local governments in the 13-county Gulf Coast Planning Region—an area of 12,500 square miles and more than 6 million people. H-GAC works to promote efficient and accountable use of local, state, and federal tax dollars and serves as a problem-solving and information forum for local government needs.