

# Goals For Tomorrow

*A Comprehensive Planning Framework for the  
Houston-Galveston Area Council*



Houston-Galveston Area Council

Adopted November 1998

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> . . . . .	1
<b>Overview</b> . . . . .	4
<b>Part One: Regional Assessment</b>	
Regional Trends . . . . .	8
Government Framework . . . . .	11
<b>Part Two: Long Range Goals</b>	
Vision Statement . . . . .	14
Physical and Economic Development . . . . .	14
Economic Development . . . . .	14
Regional Growth Patterns . . . . .	15
Regional Assets . . . . .	17
Infrastructure . . . . .	18
Transportation . . . . .	18
Solid Waste Management . . . . .	19
Stormwater Drainage . . . . .	20
Wastewater Collection and Treatment . . . . .	22
Water Supply . . . . .	23
Community Facilities . . . . .	23
Natural Resources . . . . .	24
Air Quality . . . . .	24
Habitat Protection . . . . .	26
Open Space . . . . .	27
Regional Environmental Resources . . . . .	28
Human Resources . . . . .	29
Workforce Development . . . . .	29
Public Safety . . . . .	30
Senior Citizen Services . . . . .	31
Social Services . . . . .	32
Education . . . . .	32
Health Care . . . . .	33

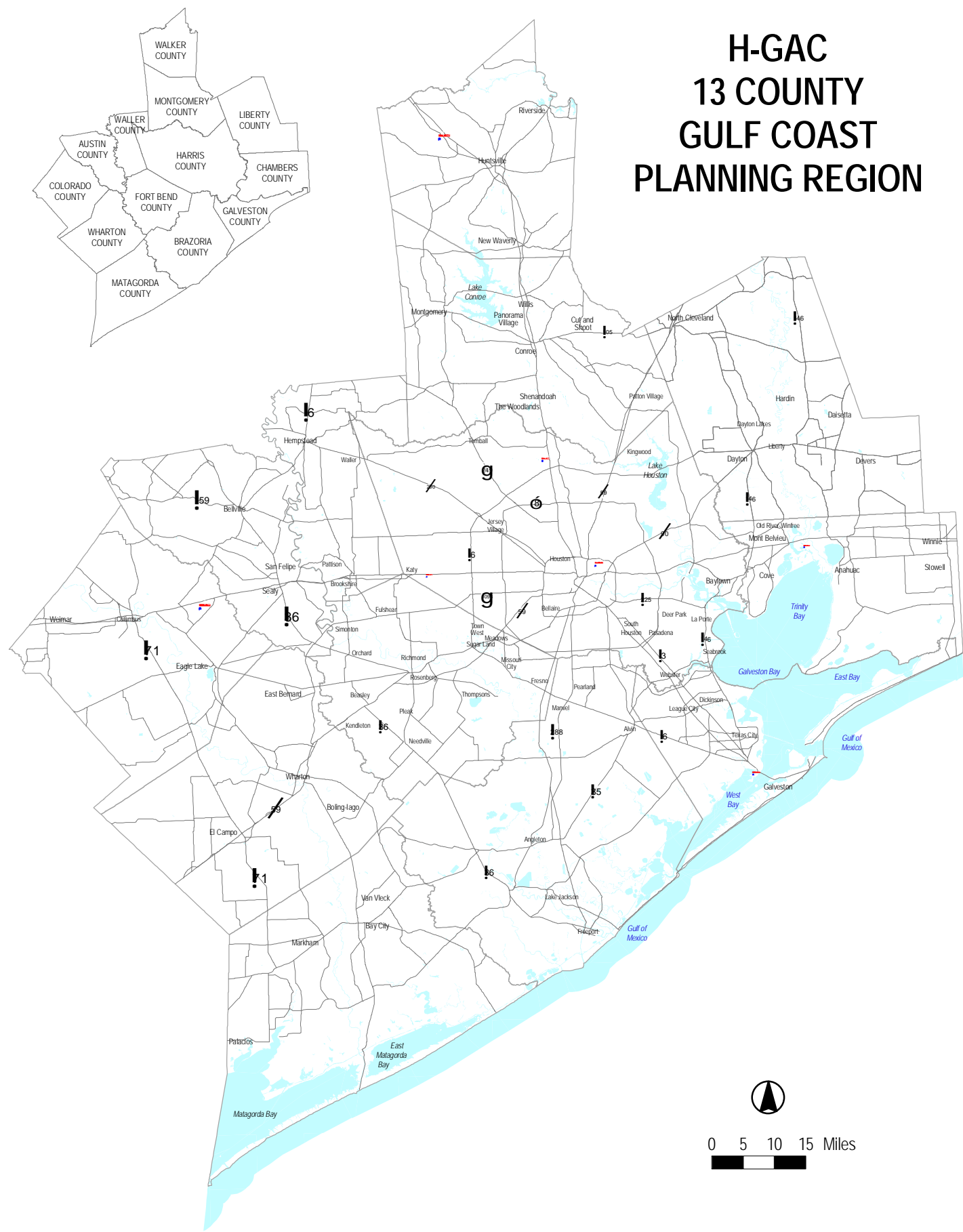


Since its formation in 1966, the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) has helped local governments respond to regional challenges and opportunities in a cooperative and positive way. The concerns and aspirations of local elected officials and the citizens they serve have shaped the regional agenda over these 30 years, as have various state and federal mandates and funding programs. Because of this legacy of intergovernmental coordination, the 13-county Gulf Coast Planning Region of Texas (see map on page 2) now has in place plans and policies to better manage our transportation system, our air and water resources, our economic growth potential, and an array of social service and human resource needs.

In 1997, H-GAC's elected-official Board of Directors thought it an appropriate time to assess the "big picture" of regional planning efforts in the Houston-Galveston area. The Board established a comprehensive Planning Committee to review H-GAC's existing planning efforts and consider emerging trends and issues facing the region. Foremost among these issues is the prospect of adding another 1.5 million people to the area's population in the next 20 years. Based on its assessment of these issues, the H-GAC Comprehensive Planning Committee reviewed the goals and objectives of existing H-GAC plans and also formulated new goals for areas in which the agency does not have current planning programs. A draft version of *Goals for Tomorrow* plan was made available to all local governments in the H-GAC region as well as to each of H-GAC's advisory committees. Their input was reviewed and incorporated into the final version of the document which was adopted, after a public hearing, by the H-GAC Board of Directors on November 17, 1998.

It is anticipated that this document, *Goals for Tomorrow: A Comprehensive Planning Framework for the Houston-Galveston Region*, will be an important tool to help H-GAC guide and integrate its existing planning programs, and also to identify potential new programs which would benefit the region and local governments. It is also hoped that it will provide a sound set of planning principles and "best management practices" that can be used by local governments throughout the region. The anticipated uses for this planning framework are shown in the diagram on page 6.

# H-GAC 13 COUNTY GULF COAST PLANNING REGION



*Houston-Galveston Area Council*

# Goals For Tomorrow

## Guides & Integrates H-GAC Plans

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# Overview

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## Background

Section 391.012 of the Local Government Code directs Regional Councils to engage in a comprehensive development planning process. The code requires the process to include:

- a needs assessment and resource identification;
- goals, objectives, policies and standards to guide the long range physical, economic, and human resource development of the region;
- identification of alternative courses of action;
- address the special functional relationships among the activities to be undertaken;
- the appropriate ordering in time of activities;
- other relevant factors affecting the achievement of the desired development of the region.

The comprehensive planning process is to result in the establishment of an overall framework for the preparation of functional and project plans and in recommendations for long range programming and financing of capital projects and facilities of mutual concern to multiple local government.

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## H-GAC Policy Plans

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) has long been involved in various ongoing functional planning programs that meet these statutory requirements. The graphic on the following page shows the scope and uses of H-GAC's major policy plans, which are described in more detail, as follows.

### Economic Development Plan (EDP)

*(Adopted by the Gulf Coast Economic Development District (GCEDD) Board of Directors, June 1998, updated annually).* The EDP is updated annually to maintain the region's eligibility for the grant programs of the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA). The plan sets goals for coordinating local economic development programs, removing barriers to business development and responding to sudden economic distress, such as the loss of a major employer.

### Gulf Coast Workforce Development Strategic Plan

*(Adopted July 1997, program service plans adopted annually).* The Gulf Coast Workforce Development Board adopted its first regional strategic plan in July of 1997. This plan contains recommendations for integrating various individual programs, including employment services, One-Stop Career Centers, temporary assistance to needy families, employment and training programs aimed at food stamp recipients, Job Training Partnership Act programs, and child care, into a regional training system.

# Scope and Uses of Major H-GAC Policy Plans

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## Workforce Development Plan – **Gulf Coast Workforce Plan**

Used to guide development of annual service and funding allocation plan to provide workforce development services for 13-county region.

- Employment services
- One-Stop Career Center
- Temporary assistance to needy family
- Food Stamp employment and training
- Job Training Partnership Act
- Child Care

## Metropolitan Transportation Plan – **Vision 2020**

Used to set transportation priorities and identify candidate projects for 3-year Transportation Improvement Program for 8-county Transportation Management Area.

- Bicycle and pedestrian system
- Good movement / waterborne ports
- Transit system
- Roadway improvements
- System management
- Financing
- Air quality

## Solid Waste Management Plan – **Resource Responsibility**

Used to guide the award of solid waste pass-through grants to local governments and in reviewing landfill permit applications.

- Source reduction
- Recycling and composting
- Landfill siting
- Special wastes
- Institutional options / local enforcement
- Public awareness

## Economic Development Plan

Used for review of economic development grant applications and as a data resource.

- Data and information resources
- Grants and finance programs
- Technical assistance

## Water Quality Management Plan

Used to guide H-GAC water quality work programs and in reviewing applications for state financial assistance for water quality-related projects.



## **Resource Responsibility: Solid Waste Management Plan for the H-GAC Region,**

**1992-2012** *(Adopted by H-GAC and the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) in 1994, last updated in 1996).*

Resource Responsibility is a comprehensive solid waste management plan with the primary goal of reducing the amount of waste entering landfills in the H-GAC region. The plan contains recommended actions for the region as a whole, as well more detailed recommendations for eight planning subregions. In addition to solid waste "source reduction" and recycling strategies, the plan also addresses landfill siting, intergovernmental coordination, and public education.

## **Vision 2020: The Houston-Galveston Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan**

*(Adopted October 1997).* Vision 2020 is the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for the 8-county (Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, Waller) Transportation Management Area (TMA). The MTP sets goals for the region's future transportation system, covering roadways, public transit, transportation systems management, bicycle/pedestrian, and multi-modal (e.g., airport, port, and rail access) projects.

H-GAC must document that the cumulative air quality impacts of MTP projects will not cause the region to exceed federal or state air quality standards. The MTP forms the basis for selecting projects proposed by local governments, METRO and TXDOT, for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a three-year plan prioritizing funding for projects that are ready to proceed.

## **Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP)**

*(Last update August 1998, updated annually).* The WQMP sets goals for maintaining/enhancing the regions water quality and recommends appropriate actions for local governments and other agencies involved in water quality management. The WQMP helps guide H-GAC's various water quality programs and also contains annual estimates and forecasts of wasteloads from domestic wastewater treatment facilities.

## **Other H-GAC Program or Service Plans**

H-GAC also prepares the following program or service plans.

- **Aging Services Plan** *(July 1998, amended annually).*  
Identifies needs and services to be provided by H-GAC Aging Services program, including meals on wheels, transportation, homemaker services and client visits, among others.
- **Criminal Justice Priorities Lists** *(adopted annually).*  
Annual prioritized lists of project proposals submitted by local law enforcement agencies for several categories of state criminal justice funding.
- **Regional 9-1-1 Strategic Plan** *(adopted July 1998, updated annually).*  
Identifies equipment requirements for maintaining the 9-1-1 systems in Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Liberty, Matagorda, Walker, Waller, and Wharton counties.



## Planning Process

In October 1997, the H-GAC Board of Directors established a Comprehensive Planning Committee to guide the plan development process. The consensus of the committee was that *Goals for Tomorrow* should:

- Describe a desired future for the region.
- Set goals for desired outcomes.
- Be at a broad policy level.
- Be concise and comprehensive.

The committee agreed that the document should not be prescriptive or overly detailed.

The steps taken by the committee in its planning process were as follows:

- Reviewed existing H-GAC plans and policies along with associated data and issues.
- Developed a vision statement for the region in 20 years.
- Established a list of major elements to be included in the plan, each of which contained several program categories.
- Reviewed issues and data associated with each category and compared against goals from existing plans.
- Developed a vision statement for each category, along with new goals, where appropriate.

A draft version of *Goals for Tomorrow* plan was made available to all local governments in the H-GAC region as well as to each of H-GAC's advisory committees. Their input was reviewed and incorporated into the final version of the document which was adopted, after a public hearing, by the H-GAC Board of Directors on November 17, 1998.

## How *Goals for Tomorrow* Will Be Used

This document will provide an overall framework that will be used to integrate and guide existing planning programs and will also be used to:

- Identify new programs for H-GAC to assist local governments.
- Provide an additional basis for H-GAC review of requests for public funding assistance under the Texas Review and Comment System (TRACS).
- Identify opportunities and showcase "best practices" for local governments to consider in planning and development decisions.

Additionally, in their resolution adopting *Goals for Tomorrow*, the H-GAC Board of Directors directed staff to evaluate the progress made by H-GAC programs towards achieving regional goals in an annual performance report. *Goals for Tomorrow* will be fully updated every five years and the H-GAC Board's Comprehensive Planning Committee will be maintained as a standing committee to meet on an as-needed basis to consider any necessary amendments and make recommendations to the Board.

# Part One: Regional Assessment

## Regional Trends

### Population Growth (see Table 1, Map 1)

The region's population has nearly doubled since 1970.

- The eight-county Houston-Galveston-Brazoria Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) has experienced the most growth.
- H-GAC's forecast predicts the region will add another 1.5 million people by 2020, with most of the growth occurring in the CMSA.
- Much of the growth within the CMSA is expected to take place in area "outside" of Beltway 8 in Harris County and in suburban Brazoria, Fort Bend, Galveston and Montgomery Counties.

**Population Trends and Forecasts, H-GAC Region 1970 - 2020**

**Table 1**

County	Total Population by Year					Average Annual Growth			
	1970	1980	1990	1996 <sup>(1)</sup>	2020 <sup>(2)</sup>	1970-80	1980-90	1990-96	1996-20
Brazoria	108,312	169,587	191,707	217,318	373,313	6,128	2,212	4,269	6,500
Chambers	12,187	18,538	20,088	24,165	36,940	635	155	680	532
Fort Bend	52,314	130,846	225,421	295,480	523,511	7,853	9,458	11,677	9,501
Galveston	169,812	195,940	217,399	239,292	366,214	2,613	2,146	3,649	5,288
Harris	1,741,912	2,409,547	2,818,199	3,087,153	3,837,655	66,764	40,865	44,826	31,271
Liberty	33,014	47,088	52,726	62,843	78,194	1,407	564	1,686	640
Montgomery	49,479	128,487	182,201	236,192	412,390	7,901	5,371	8,999	7,342
Waller	14,285	19,798	23,397	26,573	35,608	551	359	531	376
<b>CMSA Total</b>	<b>2,181,315</b>	<b>3,119,831</b>	<b>3,731,131</b>	<b>4,189,016</b>	<b>5,663,825</b>	<b>93,852</b>	<b>61,130</b>	<b>76,314</b>	<b>61,450</b>
<b>% of Region</b>	<b>94.6%</b>	<b>95.2%</b>	<b>95.7%</b>	<b>96.0%</b>	<b>96.5%</b>				
Austin	13,831	17,726	19,832	22,222	24,300	390	211	398	87
Colorado	17,638	18,823	18,383	19,473	22,524	119	-44	182	127
Matagorda	27,913	37,828	36,928	37,541	45,247	992	-90	102	321
Walker	27,680	41,789	50,917	55,879	62,388	1,411	913	827	271
Wharton	36,729	40,242	39,955	40,990	48,956	351	-29	173	332
<b>Non-CMSA Total</b>	<b>123,791</b>	<b>156,408</b>	<b>166,015</b>	<b>176,105</b>	<b>203,415</b>	<b>3,262</b>	<b>961</b>	<b>1,682</b>	<b>1,138</b>
<b>% of Region</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>				
<b>Reg. Total</b>	<b>2,305,106</b>	<b>3,276,239</b>	<b>3,897,146</b>	<b>4,365,121</b>	<b>5,867,240</b>	<b>97,113</b>	<b>62,091</b>	<b>77,996</b>	<b>62,588</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1970 - 1990); (1) Texas State Data Center 1996 estimates; (2) H-GAC 2020 Forecasts.

### Population Characteristics

- The region's population is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, more so than the state or the nation.
- The large "baby boom" age group will be moving into retirement age during the next 25 years.
- The percentage of the region's residents age 25 and over without a high school diploma is slightly below the state average and slightly above the national average.
- The region has a higher percentage of residents age 25 and over with a college degree than the state and national averages.
- Educational attainment levels are considerably higher in the CMSA counties than in the non-CMSA counties.
- Median household income levels are above those of the state and the nation in the CMSA counties and below in the non-CMSA counties.

## Employment (see Tables 2-3)

- The region gained over 200,000 jobs in the first half of the 1990's; 97% of the region's jobs are located in the CMSA counties.
- The region is expected to add another 1 million jobs by 2020, again with 97% expected to be in CMSA counties.
- The ratio of population to employment varies considerably within the region: by 2020, Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties are projected to maintain their current ratios of over four residents for every job, with Harris County is projected to have 1.55 residents per job.
- Unemployment rates have steadily declined since 1992 in all of the region's counties.
- Matagorda County still has a very high unemployment rate of 11.8%; Brazoria, Chambers, Galveston and Wharton Counties have unemployment rates over 5%.

### Wage and Salary Employment, H-GAC Region, 1980 - 2020

**Table 2**

County	Total Employment by Year				Average Annual Growth		
	1980	1990	1995	2020 (prj)	1980-90	1990-95	1995-20
Brazoria	66,855	70,790	74,377	134,554	394	598	2,407
Chambers	7,296	6,001	7,588	10,500	-130	265	116
Fort Bend	36,631	50,214	72,740	125,612	1,358	3,754	2,115
Galveston	71,341	80,190	92,086	150,561	885	1,983	2,339
Harris	1,362,721	1,537,883	1,685,383	2,475,064	17,516	24,583	31,587
Liberty	13,461	14,300	15,636	32,240	84	223	664
Montgomery	25,839	42,789	60,156	99,592	1,695	2,895	1,577
Waller	5,548	7,689	8,782	17,155	214	182	335
<b>CMSA Total</b>	<b>1,589,692</b>	<b>1,809,856</b>	<b>2,016,748</b>	<b>3,045,278</b>	<b>22,016</b>	<b>34,482</b>	<b>41,141</b>
<b>% of Region</b>	<b>96.8%</b>	<b>96.9%</b>	<b>96.9%</b>	<b>96.9%</b>			
Austin	4,889	6,454	7,616	10,817	157	194	128
Colorado	7,080	6,127	6,445	10,071	-95	53	145
Matagorda	15,213	12,965	12,836	21,790	-225	-22	358
Walker	12,843	18,950	21,459	31,156	611	418	388
Wharton	12,704	13,795	15,305	22,674	109	252	295
<b>Non-CMSA Total</b>	<b>52,729</b>	<b>58,291</b>	<b>63,661</b>	<b>96,508</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>1,314</b>
<b>% of Region</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>			
<b>Reg. Total</b>	<b>1,642,421</b>	<b>1,868,147</b>	<b>2,080,409</b>	<b>3,141,786</b>	<b>22,573</b>	<b>35,377</b>	<b>42,455</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis (1980-95); H-GAC Forecast (2020)

Note: figures are for wage and salary jobs, excluding private households, by place of work.

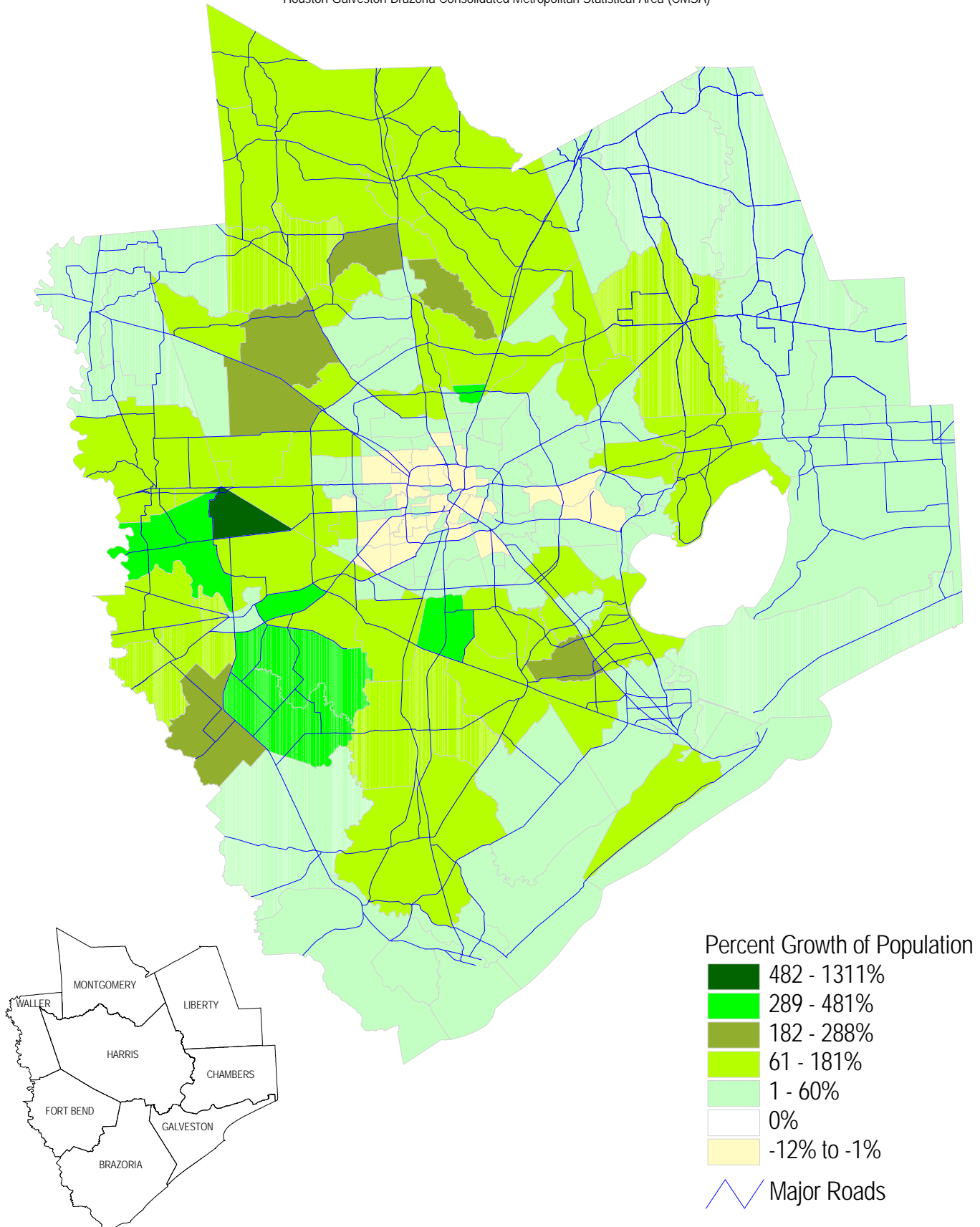
**Table 3**

	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998 (ytd)
Unemployment (%)					
<b>CMSA Counties</b>					
Brazoria	4.6	7.2	7.2	6.7	5.7
Chambers	3.8	6.2	6.6	5.2	4.2
Fort Bend	3.5	4.6	4.5	3.0	2.7
Galveston	7.0	8.9	8.4	8.1	6.3
Harris	5.1	7.4	6.7	5.5	4.0
Liberty	6.7	10.7	9.1	8.0	5.8
Montgomery	4.9	6.4	5.0	4.0	3.5
Waller	5.0	5.2	4.6	4.7	3.6
<b>Non CMSA Counties</b>					
Austin	3.7	4.3	4.0	3.6	2.8
Colorado	2.7	4.7	4.1	3.4	3.5
Matagorda	10.3	15.4	14.5	13.4	11.8
Walker	4.6	3.3	2.6	2.6	2.1
Wharton	4.1	6.7	6.7	6.3	5.3

**Average Annual  
Unemployment Rates  
H-GAC Region  
1990-1998**

# POPULATION FORECAST, 1990 TO 2020

Houston-Galveston-Brazoria Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA)



This map displays annual population growth by Regional Analysis Zones (RAZ) as forecasted by H-GAC. RAZ represent aggregates of 1990 Census Tracts. Data Source: Small Area Allocation Forecast, 1990-2020, July, 1995.

# Government Framework

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The H-GAC region has nearly 300 units of local government, including 13 counties, 132 cities, 79 independent school districts and 65 special districts and authorities. There are also approximately 500 municipal utility districts (MUDs) and many other single purpose districts.

## Local Government Roles

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### Counties

- Provide basic infrastructure and services, including roads, community facilities, law enforcement/prisons, hospitals and welfare programs.
- Have no ordinance-making authority other than certain areas specifically granted by Texas Legislature, such as septic tank regulation and landfill siting.

### Cities

- Provide a wide range of infrastructure and services.
- Home Rule cities have broad discretion in adopting local ordinances and may annex within their extraterritorial jurisdiction without the consent of affected residents.
- General Law cities have limited ordinance-making authority and must receive a consenting vote of residents of areas to be annexed.

### Independent School Districts

- Independent units of government that provide primary and secondary education for the region's children.
- Have property taxing authority.

### Special Districts and Authorities

Most of the special districts and authorities in the H-GAC region fall into one of the following categories:

- |                       |                                      |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Appraisal Districts | • Community/Junior College Districts |
| • Drainage Districts  | • Emergency Communication Districts  |
| • Hospital Districts  | • Navigation Districts               |
| • Port Authorities    | • River Authorities                  |
| • Water Authorities   |                                      |

Additionally, there are several unique districts that play a major role in regional planning.

- **Gulf Coast Waste Disposal Authority:** provides regional wastewater treatment, primarily for industrial areas, but also some residential services, in Chambers, Galveston and Harris Counties.
- **Harris County Flood Control District:** responsible for all major storm drainage conveyance infrastructure in Harris County.
- **Harris-Galveston Coastal Subsidence District, Fort Bend County Subsidence District:** regulate the extraction of groundwater and plan for conversion to surface water.
- **Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO):** provides mass transportation services and infrastructure, service area includes about 3/4 of Harris County.

## Houston-Galveston Area Council

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) is one of 24 regional planning agencies in Texas. H-GAC is a voluntary association of 150 local governments. Its chief responsibilities include:

- Providing a combination of planning and service programs.
- Allocating federal and state funds to local governments and service providers in areas such as aging services, solid waste, transportation, and workforce development.
- Serving as a forum for coordination and collective problem solving.
- Offering data, information resources and technical assistance to local governments.

## State Agencies

State agencies whose programs and policies impact local and regional planning include:

- **Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs:** awards community development grants for small cities.
- **Texas Department of Transportation:** responsible for planning and funding the construction and maintenance of major transportation projects.
- **Texas General Land Office:** manages state-owned lands, lead agency on oil spill prevention and coastal management program.

### **Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission**

**(TNRCC):** issues permits for air emissions, solid waste facilities and wastewater discharges; state air quality, solid waste management, and water quality policy and regulations; grant funding for local solid waste management programs; operates Galveston Bay Estuary Program.

- **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department:** manages state parks, grant program to fund local park development.
- **Texas Water Development Board:** provides financing for wastewater treatment and water supply facilities; lead agency for regional water planning under Senate Bill (SB) 1.

### **Other Agencies Dealing Primarily with Human**

**Resource Issues:** Texas Department on Aging, Texas Department of Health, Texas Department of Human Services, and the Texas Workforce Commission.

## Federal Agencies

Federal agencies whose programs and policies impact regional planning include:

- **Department of Housing and Urban Development:** provides Community Development Block Grants to cities and counties, various programs to provide housing for low income and elderly residents.
- **Department of Transportation:** provides the framework for funding allocations to state and regional levels, sets safety standards, addresses transportation-related environmental and social issues, conducts research and development.
- **Environmental Protection Agency:** pollution control, including permitting and standards for air emissions, solid waste facilities, hazardous waste disposal, Superfund sites, brownfields redevelopment, wastewater discharges; provides funding for local projects.
- **Economic Development Administration:** provides grants to local governments to support planning and infrastructure development.
- **Fish and Wildlife Service:** wildlife refuge management and Endangered Species Act implementation.
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency:** coordinates federal emergency preparedness; administers flood plain mapping and national flood insurance programs.
- **Rural Development Administration:** provides grant and loan programs to support infrastructure and business development in rural areas.
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers:** regulates all work in navigable waters and the disposal of dredge and fill in waters, including wetlands; designs and funds major drainage and navigation projects.

## Issues

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- **Much of the region's population lives in unincorporated areas; forecasts predict this trend will continue.**

Counties have limited authority to regulate development and provide public services. Infrastructure and services are often provided in these areas through a combination of special districts and private homeowners associations. This situation makes it difficult to coordinate development with infrastructure and service planning. In some cases, there are real or perceived disparities between the level of service provided by a city and those available to residents of unincorporated areas, making for controversial annexation situations.

- **Flooding is a major issue in the region.**

The region's terrain, climate and development patterns have made flooding an ongoing issue. Prevention of recurring flood damages will require a coordinated multi-jurisdictional effort among the entities responsible for constructing and maintaining drainage conveyances and other flood plain management mechanisms, such as buyouts of flood-prone properties, stormwater detention requirements and regulating development in the flood plain.

- **METRO is the region's only public transportation authority, and it covers only 3/4 of Harris County.**

With much of the region's population and employment growth occurring in suburban areas, many of which are outside of Harris County, there are limited options available for the provision of transit service for commuters.

- **Management of the region's natural resources is fragmented among multiple federal, state, and local agencies.**

Aside from the TNRCC's Galveston Bay Estuary Program, there are limited mechanisms for developing comprehensive natural resource management strategies among the multiple federal, state and local agencies involved, each of which has their own statutory mandates.

- **There are no financing mechanisms at the regional level to support the development of major public works projects.**

As population and employment growth expand further over a multi-county area, additional coordination or pooling of resources may be necessary to implement major regional infrastructure projects.

- **Local governments are faced with numerous unfunded mandates.**

Over the past decade, local governments have been faced with an increasing number of regulatory requirements in a time of stable to diminishing federal and state funding assistance.

# Part Two: Long Range Goals

## Vision Statement

*The Houston-Galveston region should be an area where physical and economic development, public infrastructure, and natural and human resources are coordinated to serve the needs of our citizens through communication and cooperation of responsible political jurisdictions.*

## Physical and Economic Development

### Economic Development

#### Challenges

- Maintaining region's economic competitiveness in terms of skilled workers, infrastructure, financing, business costs, and quality of life.
- Balancing economic growth between urban/suburban/rural areas.
- Achieving cooperation among multiple local governments on regional economic development efforts.

#### Opportunities

- Continuing growth in technology, international trade, and medical sciences continuing to diversify the economy.
- Planned improvements to region's ports offer additional international trade opportunities.
- Region's cultural diversity an asset in attracting businesses.

#### Vision

The H-GAC region will consistently outpace the nation in economic growth, creating job opportunities for the region's residents.

#### Goals for the Region

- Public sector investments in infrastructure, training, and finance programs strategically targeted to enable the region to realize potential job growth in key economic sectors, including energy, technology, international trade, and medical sciences.
- Expanded regional coordination and cooperation in developing marketing, and incentive programs.
- A healthy balance of economic growth between central cities, suburbs, and rural areas.

#### Economic Development Plan Goals

- Promote coordination among local economic development efforts.
- Advocate economic development projects and programs of benefit to the Gulf Coast Region.
- Removing financing barriers to business development.
- Fill gaps in existing technical assistance programs.
- Develop strategy for a comprehensive response to an actual or threatened dislocation.
- Remove job training barriers to economic development.
- Provide relevant economic and business data to support economic development activities.



## Implementation Tools

- Partnerships with the private sector and economic development organizations.
- Local economic development sales tax option.
- Federal and state grant and loan programs.
- Incentives such as tax abatements, property acquisition, enterprise and special finance zones.
- Managed regional competition to provide local government services.

## Regional Growth Patterns

The region's development has spread over wide area. This low-density development pattern has both benefits and drawbacks.

### Benefits

- Overall, housing costs remain very low for a major metropolitan area.
- Journey-to-work travel times are comparable to other major metro areas and have not significantly increased
- The emergence of major suburban employment centers enables some residents to live closer to their jobs.
- In the current strong economy we have enjoyed tremendous suburban growth as well as major redevelopment in central Houston.

### Drawbacks

- Governments may eventually reach a limit in their ability to cost-effectively extend and maintain infrastructure.
- The region has a severe air quality problem, due in large part to vehicle emissions, yet alternatives are limited because low-density development is difficult to serve with mass transit.
- The region has numerous widely dispersed employment centers that may have competing transportation needs.
- Low-density development consumes more open land and may affect sensitive natural resources.

## Quality of Life and Community-Building

- Both challenges and opportunities exist for creating a quality of life and community that will make this region an attractive place to live in the future.

### Challenges

- Predominant development patterns in this region often have limited emphasis on public spaces or the "human" scale.
- Developments are often isolated due to lack of coordination with infrastructure planning and/or because of security concerns.
- Much of the development along our major free-way corridors gives visitors to our region a poor visual introduction.

### Opportunities

- Success of master-planned communities presents a model for quality development.
- New emphasis on investment in "town centers," with major public and private development projects underway or planning in Downtown Houston, Galveston, Sugar Land, and The Woodlands.
- Excellent environment for trees and vegetation; some communities now require landscaping and tree preservation; numerous public and private sector tree planting and beautification projects currently underway. ➡

## Vision

The H-GAC region is characterized by coordination of public and private sector planning and investment, yielding well-planned, attractive communities and is perceived as offering its residents a high quality of life.

## Goals for the Region

- Local governments plan comprehensively for their futures, and plan collectively for major infrastructure investments that will benefit the entire region.
- Coordinated development and infrastructure, so development does not overwhelm transportation and other systems.
- Local and regional policies address the need for providing access to and between multiple employment centers.
- Local policies promote the strengthening of Central Business Districts and other town centers.
- Developers include considerations for pedestrian/bicycle access, and transit service when appropriate, in their designs.
- Local policies promote the conservation of open space, tree preservation, and landscaping in new development.
- Public and private development provides ample public spaces (e.g., parks, plazas) of various sizes for various uses.

## Goals from other adopted plans

- Coordinated land use and transportation development.
- Provide adequate waste disposal facilities, while preventing adverse health, social, environmental and economic impacts.

## Implementation Tools

- Local comprehensive plans, development policies and regulations.
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program.
- Review landfill permits for consistency with Resource Responsibility.

Federal, state and local government, the private sector, and other organizations have developed many cultural and entertainment assets that add to the region's quality of life, economic development and tourism potential. These assets also include historical sites and districts, and other venues which are frequented by residents and visitors to the region.

### Challenges

- Building regional partnerships to cooperatively promote these assets.
- Creating/enhancing the "wayfinding" system to improve accessibility to these assets.
- Building partnerships for jointly financing development and maintenance of these assets.
- Incorporating the development, preservation and enhancement of regional assets into local and regional plans.

### Vision

Cultural, entertainment, and historical assets significantly enhance the quality of life enjoyed by the region's residents and are a major asset in promoting tourism and economic development.

### Goals for the Region

Local governments coordinate their marketing efforts to promote the region's assets as a whole. Collaborative approaches are explored in the planning and development of cultural and entertainment facilities of region-wide benefit. Communities stress the preservation of historic and cultural heritage assets in local planning and policy-making.

### Implementation Tools

- Revenue bonds, fee-based financing, local capital budgets and private investment.
- H-GAC as a forum for exploring collaborative approaches to marketing, facility planning and development.
- Historic districts, local ordinances and financial incentive programs for historic preservation.

# Infrastructure

## Transportation

### Challenges

- Projected population growth will require major transportation investments to maintain an acceptable level of mobility for residents and provide for efficient goods movement.
- Financing mobility improvements will increasingly be the responsibility of local governments.
- Developing mechanisms for jointly financing development and improvements to major regional transportation facilities.
- Region faces the possibility of air quality sanctions that could impact transportation funding.

### Vision

Enhance mobility by providing an efficient, affordable, and environmentally responsible transportation system for both people and goods.

#### Plan References

**Vision 2020**  
*Adopted by  
Transportation Policy  
Council and  
H-GAC Board of  
Directors,  
October 1997.  
Updated at least every  
three years,  
may require additional  
amendments based  
on air quality  
conformity  
determination*

### Goals of Vision 2020 (Transportation Plan)

- A multi-modal transportation system.
- Enhancement and maintenance of existing infrastructure.
- Coordinated land use and transportation development.
- Seamless connections.
- Efficient movement of people and goods.
- An environmentally responsible system.
- Active citizen involvement.
- A cost effective and affordable transportation system.

*Vision 2020  
October 1997*

### Implementation Tools

- 3-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) 1998-2000.
- Local government comprehensive, thoroughfare and mobility plans, capital improvement programs.
- Texas Department of Transportation 10-Year Transportation Program.
- Demonstration projects.

**1998-2000  
Transportation  
Improvement  
Program** *Adopted  
October 1997  
(Updated every  
two years)*

## Challenges

- H-GAC region currently has about 9 years of landfill capacity.
- Certain parts of the region (Austin, Colorado, Matagorda, Waller and Wharton Counties) have no landfill capacity, must export all their solid waste.
- Through the TNRCC/H-GAC grant program, local government and private investments, the region now has an infrastructure for recycling collection and processing; some major end markets have also developed.
- Source reduction and recycling have reduced per capita waste disposal, but the region is well behind the pace necessary to reach the goals of the H-GAC solid waste plan.
- Solid waste management in the H-GAC region has become almost completely privatized.
- Landfill siting is becoming very difficult throughout the region.
- Illegal dumping is now regarded as one of the region's most pressing solid waste issues.

## Vision

Reduce the amount of waste disposed in the region's landfills 80% per capita by the year 2012.

Plan References

**Resource Responsibility Solid Waste Management**

*Plan for the H-GAC Region 1992-2012*

*Adopted by H-GAC and TNRCC in 1994, updated in November 1996, updated biannually*

## Goals of Resource Responsibility (Solid Waste Management Plan)

- Reduce per capita waste generation by 15% by 2012.
- Increase recycling to 65% by 2012.
- Increase composting through education, product and market development.
- Provide for adequate solid waste disposal capacity throughout the region, while minimizing environmental and siting impacts.
- Provide for adequate capacity for the disposal of special wastes, while minimizing risks to the environment.
- Coordinate and maximize resources available to local governments for effective solid waste management in a regional working relationship.
- Provide a full range of information to assist government officials, community and business leaders, educators, and the public in making sound solid waste management decisions.

## Implementation Tools

- Local government waste management and environmental enforcement programs.
- H-GAC solid waste grants program, special studies, landfill permit reviews, educational programs.
- Educational programs of other public agencies and non-profit organizations.

# Stormwater Drainage

## Challenges and Opportunities

Local governments face both flood control and water pollution challenges in managing stormwater.

### Flood Control

- As the region becomes more developed, the size of the flood plain increases.
- Shift of responsibility for planning and financing flood control projects from federal to local governments will strain local resources but provide them more flexibility to develop local solutions.
- Coordination of flood control projects between jurisdictions, lack of a county-wide regional approach in parts of the region.
- Buyouts of flood-prone properties and environmentally sensitive flood mitigation techniques are emerging as alternatives to channelization of waterways.
- Flood control projects are being used to provide multiple community benefits such as recreation and habitat protection.

### Water Pollution

- Pollution carried by stormwater runoff (nonpoint source pollution) is a major environmental concern; local governments face new federal regulations which will affect the way storm drainage systems are managed.
- Erosion is a major cause of nonpoint source pollution, and also reduces the capacity of the region's storm drainage system.
- Preventing nonpoint source pollution through education and voluntary programs or regulations will be more cost-effective than structural solutions, such as treating stormwater.

### Vision

The region's rivers, bayous, and streams are a regional asset with multiple uses; the region's storm drainage system functions effectively, reducing risks to public safety and property, while minimizing negative impacts on the environment from nonpoint source pollution and habitat loss.

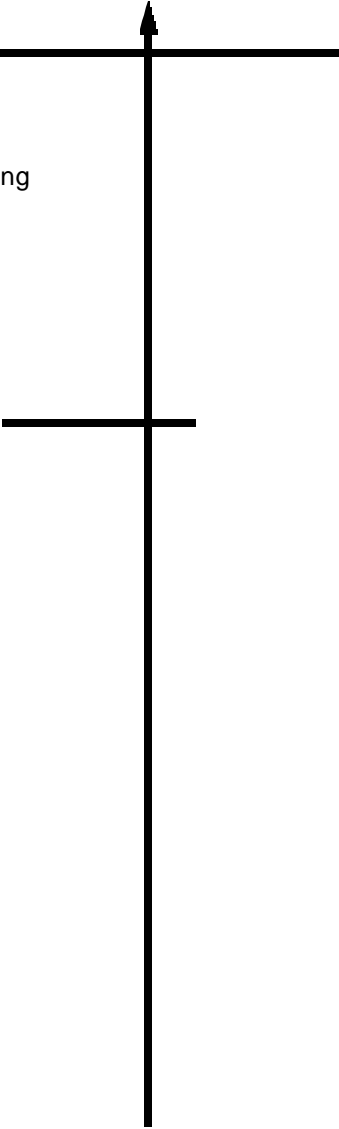
### Plan References

### Goals of H-GAC Water Quality Management Plan

- Support coordination in the planning of major drainage projects.
- Provide assistance to communities in complying with the requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program.
- Support the use of land use planning and management techniques to reduce the potential for flood damage.
- Provide information to local governments on buyouts and other means of alleviating flood hazards.

***Gulf Coast Region  
Water Quality  
Management  
Plan Update***

*Adopted by H-GAC  
Board,  
August 1998,  
updated annually*

- 
- Encourage consideration of alternatives to "channelization" for flood control projects.
  - Assist local governments in creating comprehensive approaches to developing multiple uses for the region's waterways.
  - Collect additional data to determine source and extent of pollution problems in the region.
  - Provide information on "best management practices" to prevent nonpoint source pollution.

### **Implementation Tools**

- Local Capital Improvement Programs and flood control/storm drainage management programs.
- Federal construction and grant programs.
- Local ordinances regulating land use and construction.
- Local and state enforcement against illicit discharges and illegal dumping.
- Geographic Information Systems to help identify flood prone areas and model different management scenarios.
- H-GAC community assistance visits to help local governments with NFIP compliance, workshops and information briefs.
- H-GAC-managed water quality studies conducted through the Clean Rivers Program.
- H-GAC erosion control guidebook, used in Projects Review.
- H-GAC technical assistance project to help communities with septic tank problems.

# Wastewater Collection and Treatment

## Challenges

- Pollution from municipal wastewater systems has lessened due to technological advances and corrective actions, but problems remain in some areas, particularly from small inefficient treatment plants and system bypasses and overflows; some communities are faced with expensive corrective actions.
- Increased discharges due to population growth will increase pollutant loadings to the region's waterways.
- Wastewater treatment in suburban areas is generally handled by numerous small plants rather than more efficient regional facilities.
- Treatment plants may not be the most effective approach in small towns or rural areas.

## Opportunities

- Possibility of jointly financing regional wastewater treatment facilities.
- Advance planning of regional wastewater treatment capacity can be a positive force in shaping development.

## Vision

The region has a cost-effective, efficient wastewater collection and treatment system adequate to serve our population, with minimum impacts on the environment.

Plan References

## Goals of H-GAC Water Quality Management Plan

- Support regional planning to ensure adequate wastewater treatment capacity and pollution control.
- Promote the development of "regional" wastewater treatment plants, rather than numerous small plants.
- Promote the development of alternative mechanisms, such as constructed wetlands, in small communities and rural areas.
- Provide information and training opportunities to treatment plant operators.

*Gulf Coast Region  
Water Quality  
Management Plan  
Update*

*Adopted by  
H-GAC Board,  
August 1998,  
updated annually*

## Implementation Tools

- Local Capital Improvement Programs, bond financing, Texas Water Development Board loan program.
- H-GAC forecasts of municipal wastewater discharges.
- H-GAC review of applications for state financing of wastewater treatment facilities.
- Texas Community Development program for small to fund facility development in low income communities.



## Challenges

- Long term water supply will be a key factor in the "sustainability" of future regional growth.
- Continued transition from ground to surface water in suburban areas, subsidence still a problem in some parts of the region.
- Potential cost of Safe Drinking Water Act requirements for local governments.

## Opportunities

- The region's water resources provide opportunities for industrial development, tourism, and recreation, and enhance the overall "quality of life" for residents.
- Senate Bill (SB) 1 will provide opportunities for long range regional water supply planning.

## Vision

The region has adequate long-term water supply for public consumption, agriculture and business uses, drinking water quality is preserved.

Plan References

## Goals of H-GAC Water Quality Management Plan

- Promote the use of source protection techniques to ensure the quality and safety of the region's water supply.
- Provide support for communities and other entities in coordinating long range water supply planning under SB 1.

**Gulf Coast Region  
Water Quality  
Management Plan  
Update**

*Adopted by  
H-GAC Board,  
August 1998,  
updated annually*

## Implementation Tools

- Regional water planning under Senate Bill 1.
- City and River Authority master plans. Authority of Subsidence Districts and Groundwater Conservation Districts.
- Texas Water Development Board financing.

# Community Facilities

## Challenges

- Difficult for local governments to keep pace with growth in providing/maintaining adequate community facilities.
- Some local governments face difficulties in financing these facilities.

## Vision

Region's citizens have easy access to high quality public facilities, including libraries, community centers, and neighborhood parks.

## Proposed Comprehensive Plan Goals

- Development of high quality public facilities a priority in local plans.
- Multi-jurisdictional collaboration in planning and financing of community facilities in areas with limited resources.

## Implementation Tools

- Local planning and Capital Improvements Programs.
- State and federal community facility grant and loan programs.
- H-GAC technical assistance, forum for discussing collaborative facility development.

# Natural Resources

## Air Quality

### Challenges

- Houston Environmental Foresight project ranks outdoor air pollution among the Houston area's most serious environmental problems.
- Air pollution has adverse health effects on the region's population.
- Failure to meet Clean Air Act air quality standards will negatively impact the region's economic competitiveness.
- *The region lacks a comprehensive air quality management plan.*

### Vision

H-GAC region achieves and maintains federal air quality health standards; local governments in the region take a leading role in planning and implementing solutions to air quality problems.

### Goals of H-GAC Plans and Policy Statements

- Environmentally responsible transportation system.
- The ozone standard should be attained at the lowest cost and least adverse impact and in the least intrusive manner having fewest effects on lifestyle to the nonattainment area.
- Controls should be implemented as quickly as is reasonable to better protect public health.
- Selection of controls should take into account not only the cost of the controls but also the costs associated with elevated levels of ozone in the air, including illness and medical expenses.

- Controls should be reasonably expected to reduce ozone formation or reduce exposure to the public to ozone based on widely accepted science.
- All reasonable efforts should be made to avoid State Implementation Plan (SIP) disapproval by EPA.
- Local flexibility should be preserved when possible.
- National pollution control measures should be accelerated if they contribute to ozone attainment at a lower cost and less adverse impact than state or local controls.
- Ozone reduction strategies should be region-wide, with areas reducing emissions consistent with their contribution to the problem and solution.
- Economic incentives should be explored as part of the area's attainment approach.

*Vision 2020*

*October 1997*

*Air Quality*

*Policies for*

*Houston-*

*Galveston-Brazoria*

*Ozone*

*Nonattainment*

*Area*

*Adopted by the*

*H-GAC Board of*

*Directors*

*March 1998*

## Implementation Tools

- Regional participation in Texas' State Implementation Plan and regional cooperation for air quality planning in all 13 counties.
- Region's transportation plan must meet air quality conformity standards.
- Federal Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) funds available for air pollution-reducing projects, including mass transit, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, congestion mitigation, alternative fuels, and ride sharing.
- H-GAC Clean Air public information programs.
- H-GAC Commute Alternatives programs.
- Area Emissions Reduction Credit Organization (AERCO), providing a mechanism for buying/selling pollution reduction credits.
- Other economic incentive programs such as tax abatements for emission reductions.

# Habitat Protection

## Challenges

- Population growth and development will put additional strain on habitat resources.
- The region has already sustained major wetlands losses due to development and subsidence.

## Opportunities

- H-GAC region features unique wildlife habitat, including prairie, coastal plain, forest and wetlands.
- Innovative restoration and mitigation programs to address habitat loss are underway in several parts of the region.
- Several communities have begun to capitalize on the recreation and "eco-tourism" potential of their habitat resources by the establishment of birding trails and setting aside natural areas.

## Vision

The H-GAC region values its natural habitat and is a leader in preservation, restoration and the use of innovative techniques to mitigate the negative impacts of development.

Plan References

## Goals for the Region

- Federal, state and local governments, along with conservation groups, work to acquire and preserve important wildlife habitat.
- Mitigation techniques are employed to limit the negative impacts of development on important wildlife habitat.
- Restoration programs are strategically employed to reverse habitat degradation.

## Goals of H-GAC Water Quality Management Plan

- Collect data on the biological health of the region's waterways.
- Develop and distribute an inventory and map of critical habitat and other environmentally sensitive areas.
- Provide information and training on habitat protection methods.

*Gulf Coast  
Region Water  
Quality Management  
Plan Update  
Adopted by  
H-GAC Board,  
August 1998,  
updated annually*

## Implementation Tools

- Galveston Bay Plan and Texas Coastal Management Plan Consistency Review.
- Local development regulations. Federal funding under National Estuary Program and Coastal Zone Management Act.
- Biological monitoring projects funded through Texas Clean Rivers Program.
- Public and private land acquisition programs, conservation easements.
- Educational programs of non-profit habitat preservation groups.

## Challenges

- Increasing population in low-density development patterns will consume vast amounts of open land.

## Opportunities

- Open space acquisition is expensive but is less costly if done in advance of intense development pressure.
- New development concepts emerging which conserve open space.

## Vision

Public/private partnerships in land conservation and development techniques which use land more efficiently allow the H-GAC region to accommodate projected population growth while maintaining adequate open space for the enjoyment of its residents.

## Goals for the Region

- Conservation of open space is a major component of local comprehensive plans and development policies.
- Collaborative public/private approaches are employed to strategically acquire and set aside open land for public recreation, flood control and habitat conservation purposes.

## Implementation Tools

- Federal, state, local and private land acquisition programs.
- Other land conservation tools, such as conservation easements.
- Local development policies.

## Regional Environmental Resources

The H-GAC region has a number of major environmental resources which provide economic, recreational and aesthetic benefits and which require a comprehensive approach for effective management.

These include:

- River and bayou system
- Gulf of Mexico
- The Katy Prairie
- Galveston Bay Estuary System
- Trinity River bottomlands

### Challenges

- Balancing competing economic and environmental interests.
- Management responsibilities fragmented among many federal, state and local agencies.
- Lack of data documenting the source and extent of environmental problems and the effectiveness of management solutions.

### Vision

Sound management of the region's major environmental resources, balancing preservation and economic development considerations, yields significant economic and quality of life benefits for the region's residents.

### Goals for the Region

- Local plans support preservation and enhancement of resources and encourage private development and design that complements these natural features and minimizes negative impacts.
- Coordination of management efforts at federal, state and local levels.
- Involvement of all stakeholders, including public agencies, industry, fishing/agricultural/timber interests, environmental groups, citizens, in management decision-making and implementation.
- Support and participation in other planning programs, including Galveston Bay Estuary Program, Texas Coastal Management Program, Gulf of Mexico Program.
- Promotion of "eco-tourism," and other economic development opportunities based on the region's major environmental assets.

### Implementation Tools

- Galveston Bay Program
- Texas Coastal Management Program
- Gulf of Mexico Program
- Clean Rivers Program

# Human Resources

## Workforce Development

### Challenges

- A highly skilled workforce is a critical factor in economic development.
- Publicly funded workforce programs are fragmented among many narrowly targeted programs.
- Employers are not the key customers of these programs.
- There is insufficient labor market information for employers and residents.
- Working poor and welfare recipients need adequate skills to compete successfully in the work force.
- Child care and transportation must be part of the workforce development system.

### Opportunities

- H-GAC regional Workforce Development program synthesizing numerous individual programs into a comprehensive system.
- The region has several major universities and community college systems that can provide resources for workforce development.

### Vision

The H-GAC region has a highly skilled workforce, residents have access to meaningful training opportunities.

#### Plan References

***Gulf Coast  
Workforce  
Development  
Board Regional  
Workforce Plan***

*Adopted July 1997,  
individual program  
service plans  
updated annually*

### Goals of the Regional Workforce

- Plan to meet Gulf Coast employers' human resource needs.
- To provide Gulf Coast residents with good jobs.
- To support regional efforts to recruit high-wage, high-skill employers.

### Implementation Tools

- Employment service programs.
- Adult education and literacy programs.
- Job training programs.
- Welfare-to-work programs.
- Child care and public transportation program coordination with job training.

# Public Safety

## Challenges

- Resources available for police, fire and emergency medical services vary among different communities in the region.
- Regional 9-1-1 system has been built and is currently being upgraded, the future challenge will be to keep the technology current.
- Cost of police, firefighting and emergency medical equipment.

## Opportunities

- Local governments and the private sector can build and enhance partnerships for coordinating disaster preparedness, emergency management and evacuation.

## Vision

Achieve the highest possible level of public safety throughout the region.

Plan References

## Goals for the Region

- Cost-effective police, fire, and emergency medical services for the region's residents.
- Multi-jurisdictional collaboration in areas with limited resources.
- Meaningful training opportunities for law enforcement officers.
- Multi-jurisdictional planning for emergency preparedness and response.

## Implementation Tools

- Upgrading and maintaining the regional 9-1-1 network through H-GAC's program in Brazoria, Chambers, Colorado, Fort Bend, Liberty, Matagorda, Waller, Walker, and Wharton Counties; Local programs in Austin, Galveston, Montgomery and Harris Counties.
- H-GAC regional law enforcement training program.
- H-GAC cooperative purchasing program, achieving economies of scale in equipment purchases and providing expertise in up-to-date equipment specifications.

**H-GAC Regional  
9-1-1 Strategic Plan**

*Adopted July 1998,  
updated annually*

**Criminal Justice  
Funding Priority  
Lists**

*Updated annually*

*Cooperative  
Purchasing Program  
Bids and Contracts*



## Challenges

- Service programs for senior citizens are fragmented among different agencies and non-profit groups.
- Cost of providing these services will increase as "baby boomers" age and local governments stand to bear an increasing share.

## Opportunities

- The option of independent living is greatly enhanced for the region's senior citizens if the proper services are available.
- Effective retirement planning can help reduce future Senior Citizens' reliance on public support systems.

## Vision

The region's Senior Citizens have the option to live independently as long as they are capable because they have access to a network of support services that match their needs.

Plan References

## Goals for the Region

- Fragmented programs meshed together into a regional service delivery system.
- Program flexibility to match local and individual needs.
- Adequate information and referral services so senior citizens can take advantage of available programs.
- Collaborative partnerships between federal, state and local governments and non-profit organizations.

## H-GAC 1998 Program Goals

- Provide 446,255 congregate meals to 2,790 senior adults.
- Provide 300,210 meals to 5,085 older adults.
- Provide 180,390 trips to 2,115 clients.
- Provide 51,600 hours of homemaker service for 565 seniors.
- Provide 6,555 hours of respite care for 119 seniors.
- Provide 2,305 hours of personal assistance care for 49 clients.
- Provide 1,183 hours of case management services.
- Repair the homes of 14 senior adults Provide 12 hours of nutrition consultation with local service providers.
- Provide information & assistance to 6,680 clients Make 1,765 visits to retirement homes.
- Provide 480 hours of legal services.
- Provide 250 individuals Elder Abuse.
- Prevention training.

**H-GAC Area  
Agency on  
Aging Area  
Service Plan**

*Adopted by the  
Aging Programs  
Advisory Committee,  
July 1998, amended  
annually.*

## Implementation Tools

- Federal funding through the Health and Human Services Administration on Aging.
- State funding through the Texas Department on Aging.
- Houston Area Agency on Aging program, serving Harris County.
- H-GAC 12-county program, contracts with service providers.
- Local government and charitable organization-funded programs.

## Social Services

### Challenges

- Changing demographics and the impacts of welfare reform may necessitate new approaches in the provision of social services.
- Existing programs are fragmented among multiple agencies and non-profit service providers.

### Vision

The H-GAC region is a place where individuals and families have access to information, counseling, and other services to enable them to overcome barriers, face crisis, and lead productive lives.

### Goals for the Region

- The region's network for social service delivery addresses local and individual needs.
- Partnerships between federal, state, and local governments, the private and non-profit sectors, and volunteer networks are expanded and enhanced.
- Residents have adequate information and referral so they can access available programs.
- Intake and referral protocols are standardized and streamlined, to the extent feasible, bureaucracy is reduced so that the maximum amount of funding goes directly towards service provision.

### Implementation Tools

- H-GAC projects review of grant applications.

## Education

### Challenges

- Region's long-term economic competitiveness will be impacted by the effectiveness of the education system and its ability to serve a growing and increasingly diverse population.
- Perceived quality of the school districts is a major determinant in many people's choice of where to live within the region.

### Opportunities

- The region's K-12 education system compares favorably to other major metro areas; academic performance and financial management continue to improve.
- The region's community college system is continuing to expand and improve.
- The region has a number of universities which produce highly-skilled graduates and have extensive research capabilities.

### Vision

Residents of the H-GAC region have access to the highest possible quality of education in all phases of life.

## Goals for the Region

- Successful early childhood programs, stressing high levels of parental involvement, ensuring that children begin school ready to learn.
- The region's K-12 education system is equipping students to excel academically, as indicated by specific performance measures.
- Independent School Districts coordinate with one another, as well as with local governments, in their long range planning.
- Expanded partnerships between schools, local governments, private businesses and civic groups.
- Coordination between the region's institutions of higher learning with local governments and the private sector.
- Employment training and continuing education programs are accessible to all the region's residents.
- Coordination between the region's public agencies, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and other educational service providers to expand and enhance adult literacy and English as a Second Language programs.

## Implementation Tools

- School district, community college and university long range planning.
- Federal, state and private/non-profit funding.
- H-GAC as a forum for communication and coordination and data sharing.

## Health Care

### Opportunities

- Region has the Texas Medical Center, one of the world's major medical complexes.

### Challenges

- Some rural areas lack hospital facilities and have more difficulty accessing emergency medical care.
- Aging population will make health care an even more important issue in the future.
- Providing health care to low-income persons with little or no insurance has an impact on county budgets.

## Vision

The H-GAC region's residents have access to the highest possible quality health care, including prevention, screening and intervention.

## Goals for the Region

- Partnerships and collaborative financing approaches are employed to develop health care facilities in rural areas with limited resources.
- Public/private partnerships are utilized to develop educational campaigns stressing prevention and early intervention.

## Implementation Tools

- Local government and hospital district budgets.
- H-GAC as a forum for program coordination.



is a voluntary association of local governments and local elected officials in the 13-county Gulf Coast Planning Region – an area of 12,500 square miles with over 4.3 million people.

Organized in 1966 by local elected officials after authorization by State enabling legislation, H-GAC has 148 local government members – 13 counties, 106 cities, 18 school districts, and 11 soil and water conservation districts – including all major general-purpose local governments in the 13-county region.

Governed by a Board of Directors composed of 33 local elected officials – 14 representing county governments, 17 representing cities, 1 representing school districts, and 1 representing conservation districts. Board members are designated annually by the local governments they represent. All are members of governing bodies of the jurisdictions they represent.

H-GAC's chief mission is to serve local governments today while helping them plan for tomorrow.

In fulfilling that mission, H-GAC works to:

Promote efficient and accountable use of local, State, and Federal tax dollars.

•

Serve as problem-solving and information forum for local governments.

Help local governments, businesses, and civic organizations analyze trends and conditions affecting the area and respond constructively, either individually or collectively.



Houston-Galveston Area Council

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