



Thinking about our region's future

Envision Houston Region will give us some pictures of possible future growth that reflect the values of the Houston region's citizens. What are the factors that will guide that vision, and the values that we have consensus about?

What do we need to know ?

If we are going to begin envisioning Houston's future, there are some things we should know about what the experts predict. The Houston-Galveston Area Council, which initiated the Envision Houston Region process, says we should expect about 3.2 million new residents by 2035. So the big questions are these:

- Who are these newcomers?
- Where will they live, work, learn, and play?
- What infrastructure will we need to accommodate them?
- What do we need to think about in terms of conservation of existing assets?

Other questions are about today:

- Who are we now?
- Where do we live?
- Where do we work?
- How do we get around?

Workshop Locations

Houston: Sept 17 – **Note change:**

University of Houston Hilton. 4800 Calhoun. 8:30 am.

West Harris County: Sept 22 – Omni

Hotel. 13210 Katy Freeway. 7:30 am.

Baytown: Sept 24 – Baytown Community

Center. 2407 Market Street. 8:30 am.

Conroe: Sept 30 – Lone Star Convention

Center and Expo. 9005 Airport Road (FM 1484). 8:30 am

Angleton: Oct 1 – Angleton Recreation

Center. 1601 North Valderas. 8:30 am.

REGISTER ONLINE AT

www.envisionhoustonregion.org

Our region today

Our 8-county region, at 7,705 square miles, is bigger than New Jersey and contains about 5 million people. Most of us live in Harris County (73 percent) and the rest live in the surrounding 7 counties. Fort Bend and Montgomery Counties have been the fastest growing, but over the last 10 years, 62 percent of the new people have settled in Harris.

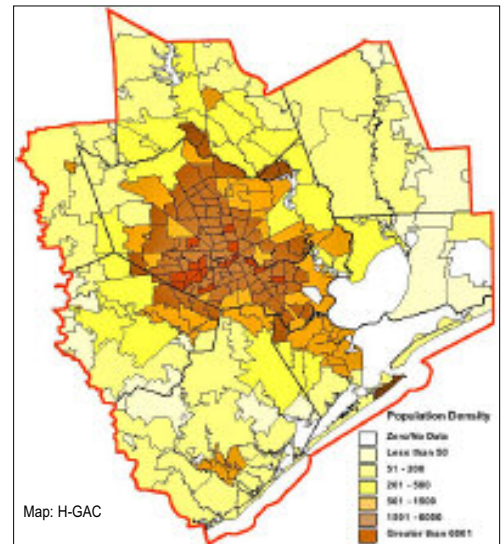
About half the region is rural and half urbanized, with the majority of the urbanized space settled in suburban patterns.

The City of Houston is the largest municipality, with about two million people living in slightly more than 600 square miles. There are more than 100 other incorporated areas, with Pasadena and Baytown the next biggest cities. More than 2 million people live in unincorporated areas.

In Harris County, we are 42 percent Anglo, 33 percent Hispanic, 18 percent African-American, and 7 percent Asian.

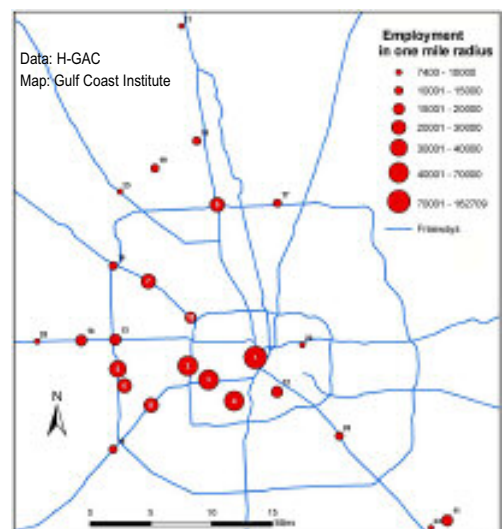
Nearly all the jobs are in the urbanized areas. The top 25 job centers, as seen at right, are mostly inside the City of Houston, with each of the top six having more jobs than downtown San Diego or Miami.

We have about 21,200 miles of roadways, and cars provide by far the most common means of mobility. We drive more than people do in any other metropolitan region in the US.



Map: H-GAC

Population density generally decreases further from the center (top), with most growth on the west side. Job centers include the 25 shown below, mostly in Houston.



Data: H-GAC
Map: Gulf Coast Institute

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HOUSTON REGION

As a percentage of household expenses, we spend more on transportation than any other region, and are second (after Anchorage, Al) in per capita household cost of transportation. About 20 percent of us are too young to drive, and another 20 percent don't drive either because of disabilities, age, income, or choice. The primary transit availability is buses, with 7.5 miles of light rail. Generally, all the transit is within the Metro service area, which is about 2/3 of the Harris County area. There is some transit outside this area, primarily in Galveston and Montgomery counties.

Who is coming?

According to the State demographer, approximately 82 percent of the people who will move to Houston by 2035 will be of Hispanic origin, mostly from Mexico. African-Americans will make up 7 percent of that increase, the Anglo population will decrease by 97,000, and 13 percent of the newcomers will be "other," mostly Asians.

What is the geography?

The Houston region is one of the most complex in North America, with a large number of watersheds leading into estuaries and bays and then into the Gulf of Mexico. The major ecological regions, as seen in the map at right, are the Gulf, Galveston Bay and the estuary system, coastal marshes, coastal prairie systems, piney woods, Post Oak Savannah, Big Thicket, and four rivers with rich bottomland areas.

The most important part of the ecostructure is the water system, which we need for survival. This system also threatens our built infrastructure at times of hard rains, particularly during tropical storms and hurricanes, which are common in the Gulf of Mexico. Buildings in the floodplain have some risk of flooding, and pavement or other impervious materials anywhere in the watersheds contribute to flooding. So understanding of the watersheds is important in considering where to build.

What will we need to build?

At current household sizes, we will need 1.2 million new residential units. At current development densities, that will require about 1,525 square miles of land to be developed. This is approximately 2.5 times the area of the City of Houston. Whether to continue to develop at this rate is a question for Envision Houston Region participants to answer.

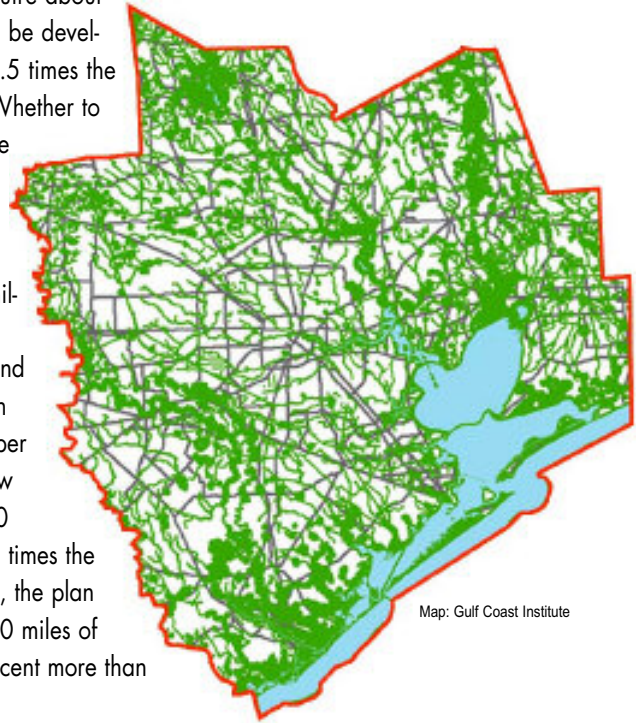
At rule-of-thumb rates, 3.2 million new people will need 2 million new cars, with roads and parking spaces for them. At an average of 3 parking spaces per car, we will need 6 million new spaces, or something over 100 square miles. That's an area 4 times the size of Manhattan. In addition, the plan for the region is to add 12,900 miles of new road lanes, about 60 percent more than we now have.

One study from Virginia Tech estimates that, in Harris County alone, we will need to build some 5 billion square feet of new residential and non-residential structures by 2035, and that is equal to about 80 percent of what we have today.

The Big Question

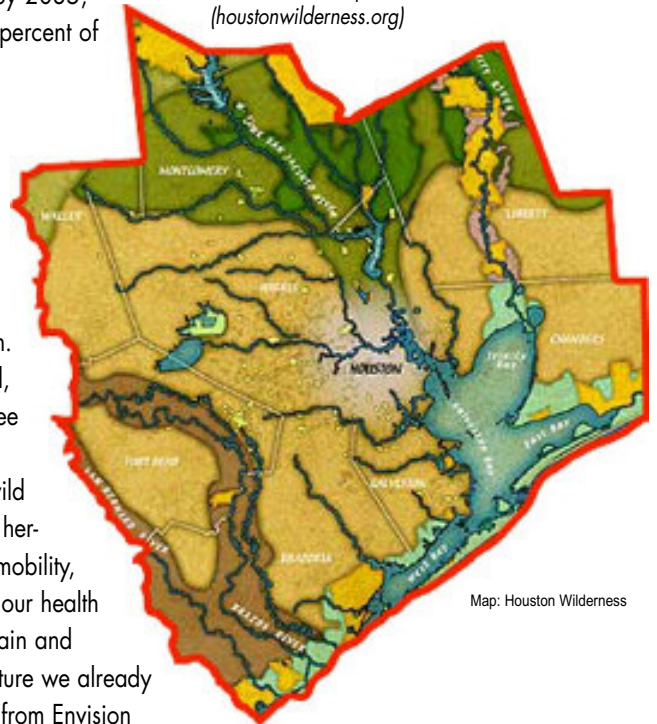
What, where, when, and how to build next is the Big Question for the Envision Houston Region participants and other citizens of the region. We know that Americans - and, presumably, Houstonians - agree that the biggest issue is how to conserve what we have, our wild and natural areas, our historic heritage, our diverse culture, our mobility, our sense of community - even our health and safety. How will we maintain and make the most of the infrastructure we already have? The vision that emerges from Envision

Houston Region will help determine the answers to those questions, for this generation and for others to come.



Map: Gulf Coast Institute

The Houston region is rich with rivers, bays, creeks, and other drainage facilities as seen in the green lines (top). Flooding is natural and common. Several important ecosystems converge on the center of Houston, as seen below in a map from Houston Wilderness. (houstonwilderness.org)



Map: Houston Wilderness



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It's about your future

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