

## Background on CEER and HOME:

The Coalition for Environment, Equity and Resilience (CEER) is a collaboration raising awareness of the connection between pollution, place, and the public's health. CEER brings together advocacy, social justice and education groups from three main constituencies: environmental justice, affordable housing, and conservation. Together, these main constituencies developed an 8-point plan to guide recovery efforts and infrastructure spending after Hurricane Harvey.

HOME is a diverse coalition of community-based organizations in Texas. Our shared mission is to make Houston stronger, more resilient, and more equitable in the long road to recovery from Hurricane Harvey. HOME believes that storms like Harvey hit hardest for people of color, immigrants, low-income families, and low-wage workers. These communities have an important and powerful voice in how the government makes choices about its future. HOME's focus is on long-term recovery and making sure that federal, state, and philanthropic funds serve communities in the Greater Houston area most affected by natural disasters.

All answers should be limited to 50 words or less. We appreciate you participating and informing community members about your positions on these topics.

## Environmental Equity and Resiliency:

Environmental Equity addresses the built and natural environment. It is not limited to parkland, or the preservation of natural resources like bayous or prairies, but whether a community has access to the same safe drinking water, the same walkability to schools, the same clean air, and the same open or natural park spaces as other communities. As a city, Houston has a long history of segregation by race and class, along with numerous superfund sites, on-going pollution issues with its own infrastructure, and a lack of resources to adequately protect resources like air, water, and land.

1. What is your top environmental concern for the City and as mayor, what can your office do to address it? (Air pollution, water pollution, trash, flooding, etc.)

Answer:

Flooding: Perform more preventative maintenance and repairs to existing storm sewer lines and drainage ditches. Increase green infrastructure for the purpose of absorbing and filtering excess flood water as well as create more detention ponds. Use monies collected for drainage fees appropriately.

2. What tools would you utilize as a mayor to ensure environmental clean-up of degraded land sites as well as reverse the documented pattern of siting landfills, recycling centers, and industrial facilities in low-income and minority neighborhoods?

Answer:

My thoughts are similar to point 6 in your action plan which is to take a regional approach. Increase recycling opportunities, maximize diversion of harmful materials to minimize effects on communities. Clean them up. Build away from these communities. Get help from private sector.

3. As mayor, what are the first three steps you will take to implement the proposed Houston Climate Action Plan?

Answer:

At this point all that's left is to review it with all stakeholders, approve it, be transparent to public as we go-live.

4. Do you think it appropriate to increase the City's budget line item for environmental enforcement? Do you think that enforcement should be housed in the legal department or in public health?

Answer: Yes. Health with the support of law enforcement; especially in lieu of so many recent accidents and the need to follow up on corrective action requirements.

5. Within CEER's 8-point plan, which priority is most meaningful to you and why?

Answer: Embrace Resiliency. Obviously we will continue to flood and grow in population. Being proactive will help us prevent a lot of future damage. Ensuring that future public investments reflects the array of risks we face is key and also important for the city we leave for generations to come.

Flooding and Transportation Infrastructure:

We know that Houston will never stop flooding. We also know that federal funding for flood mitigation is often required to be spent in the areas that have the highest property values, creating a reverse incentive to spend additional capital dollars in areas that have already received investment in the past. The two watersheds which, according to the SSPEED center, had the most residential flooding were Greens watershed and Brays watershed and there are no United States Army Corps of Engineers projects slated for those watersheds. Continuing development will likely create additional flooding problems in those watersheds.

1. How do you propose to protect and expand the riparian corridors and the existing natural flood control ability of the land within City limits?

Answer: Continue to work with the Riparian Corridor Protection Initiative. Purchase adjacent land and use existing land to improve essential riparian vegetation and the quality of water flow is key to many Houston waterways. Education and community partnership is key to its success as well.

2. What are some of the tools you believe the mayor of Houston could use to address flooding in the Greens and Brays watershed outside of simply coordinating with Harris County Flood Control District? In other words, what will you do with the City budget to address these on-going watershed issues within city limits?

Answer: I review what's allotted to the Public Works Department already and be sure to prioritize this matter and add more funding as needed. This is a matter of high priority, it is not a decision to be made by the Public Works Director alone.

3. How will you ensure that the City's Resiliency and Climate Actions plans are fully incorporated into transportation planning for projects like the I-45 expansion, the Vision Zero Initiative, and METRONext?

Answer: This project is huge with many moving parts and are receiving mixed, mostly concerned, confused and negative, public reaction. I would take a step back and review closely how these projects will impact both plans. Then make the necessary adjustments as needed.

## Affordable Housing:

There are many options to expand affordable housing: developer incentives that require that a proportion of units are affordable, better leveraging of federal housing funds to get more units per dollar in partnership with others, use of state and local bond and development incentives (e.g., 380 agreements), Limited Equity Corporations, or land banking to name a few.

1. In your own words, describe the role the City plays in affordable housing specifically for families earning below average median income, and how you as mayor of the third largest city in the nation would engage in that role?

Answer: The City's Department of Housing and Community Development helps citizens navigate through different programs to obtain affordable housing, offer down-payment assistance, education, etc. As Mayor, I would continue these programs also evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department to make improvements with our customer service and processing times.

2. Understanding Hurricane Harvey funds have already been allocated, and many Houstonians are still not properly housed, what is your plan for leveraging other funding sources and economic incentives (i.e. 380 agreements, tax abatements, TIRZ, etc.) to increase quality affordable housing stock throughout the City?

Answer: The Harvey funding project has been a nightmare. When electing I would double down on getting the funds in the hands of the citizens; many who have been waiting a long time. This would be a great opportunity to use TIRZ more effectively namely in impoverished areas that have been overlooked.

3. Today, a household earning the median (and below) income in Houston cannot afford the median housing costs in Houston. What is your plan to reduce displacement in gentrifying areas while also expanding affordable housing choices in well-resourced areas?

Answer: Gentrification displacement can be addressed by not increasing property taxes for existing residence. I will expand on such programs as the LARA and work with our community partners to expand affordable housing choices.

4. What policies or initiatives will you implement to ensure more development of affordable housing along or in close proximity to frequent public transportation lines?

Answer: I would advocate for and be a mediator between Metro and developers to make sure public transportation is available in such areas. Citizens have suffered because having no transportation disrupts education and employment needs and responsibilities.

5. Should the City have an emergency management plan in place, and available beds identified for longer term rental, for future storms?

Answer: Yes. As a former first-responder for the City of Houston, I know how important it is to have a fully comprehensive plan in place for future storms to include evacuation, restoration, recovery, housing, reimbursement funding, aid, etc.

Transparency:

1. If you are elected, please describe three actions you will take to ensure transparency in the City's budget process and its priorities in spending beyond the annual CIP meetings held throughout the districts?

Answer: 1. Provide copies of finalized budget and updates to all Super Neighborhood Alliances. 2. Use TV, Radio, and social media to keep the public informed. 3. Make information readily available to all registered voters and potential registered voters.

Job Creation and Workforce Development:

The Houston Chronicle recently reported that "net migration" to Harris County (and the City of Houston) has been negative for the last three years, meaning more people are leaving than coming.<sup>1</sup> This creates a labor shortage and slows economic development, but also provides an opportunity to reinvest and "in-fill" the city to provide a more attractive quality of life. To do this, however, skilled labor will be required and continued opportunity to encourage advancement and training within city limits may be necessary.

1. Please describe in your own words key elements that are needed to construct a city-wide workforce development program and key partnerships you think would be necessary to ensure young Houstonians can find jobs locally within 10 years. Answer: The key would be workforce out-reach. As a former recruiter for the City of Houston, being present in neighborhoods and on college campuses proved to be very effective in hiring Houston's youth. I would also develop more partnerships with the private sector to carry out such assignment.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/economy/article/Slowing-population-growth-another-challenge-ot-14021444.php>

2. Do you see local hire as a priority for workforce development? Why or why not? Answer: Yes, when we hire locally we keep the monies in the local economy. We also strengthen families, build stronger communities which makes our city that much stronger. We'll also reduce homelessness.

#### Worker Protections:

The HOME Coalition fully supports the Better Builder Program created by one of our member organizations. The Better Builder Program creates good jobs in the construction industry by establishing minimum standards on construction sites. These standards include a living wage for all construction workers, OSHA 10-hour safety training for all workers, workers compensation coverage, local hiring goals to place workers in approved skills training programs, and independent on-site monitoring to ensure these standards are met.

1. Would you support incorporating these standards as minimum requirements in the City? Please explain why or why not.

Answer: Yes. This would decrease our unemployment rate, reduce homelessness, and also allow room for those felons seeking a second-chance to find employment all of these ideas will help keep our local economy strong.

2. Many government entities have passed fair contracting (often referred to as responsible bidder ordinances) or best value contracting to level the playing field between construction entities. Explain how you would work towards better transparency in all city bids. Answer: Ending our pay to play style of giving contracts. Re-evaluating the entire bidding process and make sure that any perception of corruption is eradicated. Forming an independent committee to have oversight of the bidding process.