

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.)

I am concerned about the lack of action on local environmental disasters related to the refineries across Houston. Despite refinery fires becoming a regular feature of our city the current leadership is not addressing the concern.
As part of my Hemp Houston plan I am calling for incentivizing local oil and gas companies to invest in hemp for fuel research (as well as other alt fuel sources). I am also calling for ending contracts with companies responsible for environmental degradation.

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?

I would use my voice and my office to lobby for environmental issues. Although any Mayor can come in and create new bureaucracy and ordinances, I am interested in motivating the people of Houston into taking an active role in protecting our communities from being targeted for environmental racism. Landfills, recycling centers and industrial centers should not be hoisted upon low income communities of color.

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

Again, I am interested to see how any plans for addressing environmental concerns can be implemented with as much community involvement as possible. I would be interested in hosting open climate townhalls around Houston to hear the concerns of the people and see how we can address the environment in a way that respects all community members - rich and poor alike.

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?

I think concrete environmental plans and agendas must be discussed with public input before increasing any amount of funding. I think enforcement should be in public health.

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

I am most interested in the points made around air, land and water. Americans are consistently exposed to chemicals, pesticides, and other contaminants through our water, air, and the soil. These are critical areas to begin addressing how to limit these exposures.

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?

My Hemp Houston plan calls for planting native plants, as well as Hemp in and around water ways to help reduce flooding and erosion. We need to discourage so much building - residential and commercial - and preserve as many green spaces as possible.

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?

Again, we need more green space in Houston, less building, and better management of the funds that are available.

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?

I don't support the 1-45 expansion and I don't support Metro's plans. I support the stated goals of Vision Zero - reducing deaths - however, I would like to revisit the plan as a whole and see what steps might not be necessary and what other steps may be 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?

I do not think this is an area the city government should be involved in. I believe the answer is better education on entrepreneurship opportunities, vocational training, etc. The city needs to stop working with developers who have no interest in maintaining the traditions of many of Houston's historic neighborhoods.

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?

I do not believe this is the role of the local government. Still, the funds that were set aside to help Harvey victims have not made it in the hands of Houstonians in need. We need to revisit the funds and do a full audit to understand what went wrong.

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?

I do not think the government should be involved in this area.

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?

Discourage and stop providing incentives to the developers who are building townhomes right next to each other and gentrifying communities around Houston.

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

Yes, an emergency management plan is necessary. However, we need to accept the reality that Houston is an increasingly unsustainable place to live. If the climate continues in the current direction we should expect flooding to continue and worsen. Plans need to be made to encourage people to stop moving to Houston and develop a strategy for helping those who are already here.

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?

Make the budget and the budgeting process a public event, where community members can have full access to the budget and provide input.

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.¹ 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.

I do not believe in central planning to this degree. I think we need to encourage personal responsibility and encourage young Houstonians to get educated and skilled in areas where this is a demand for jobs.

¹ <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?

Hiring Houstonians who live in proximity to the workplace could reduce the need for long commutes and reduce strains on infrastructure. I support local hire as a priority for City government. The city should not intervene in hiring practices of local businesses.

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.

I don't know what exactly is meant by a living wage - such a term is completely subjective. However, I do support independent on site monitoring to ensure standards are being met.

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.

I support responsible bidder ordinances in contracting. I especially like the idea of an ordinance which includes proof of participation in an apprenticeship training program, proof of certificates of insurance, and compliance with all local, state, and federal laws.
