

## **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.)

These are all important and I would appoint a sustainability director. The director I appoint responsibility will be to have a strategic plan that my administration can implement. This mayor has chosen not to have an active and involved sustainability director. I would make this change a priority.

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 utilize federal dollars to clean up degraded land sites, and implement a permitting process to control where sites will be located.

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

Much of the work of being an effective mayor is making sure there is an expert in place. I will hire a sustainability director to come up with a plan to create and implement a Houston Climate Action Plan.

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?

Yes it is appropriate to increase this. It should be housed in the legal department, which will work with our district attorney, who has demonstrated that they will go after people who violate environmental laws.

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

How can you pick a favorite child? They are all meaningful, because they protect the quality of life of our citizens.

**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?

In order for the city to have an effective plan, we must upgrade the tools for data collection - anything that we do concerning flooding must be done within a regional approach. Within city limits, in order for the city to have an effective plan, we must first upgrade the technology we use for data collection. We must not use old models and data to plan for our more frequent 500 year storms.

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?

We cannot control the rain - but we can control what happens when it hits the ground. We are currently working on outdated models for data collection, and it needs to be upgraded.

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 am absolutely opposed to the I45 expansion - I will have a sustainability director that will interact with other agencies and ensure that the cities and climate action plans are incorporated.

## **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 have experience in this issue - I worked with the company that won the contract to rebuild housing in Galveston after Ike. The mixed income model is a successful one. I would direct the housing department to use this model going forward with our housing needs.

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 would form partnerships that would build affordable housing stock. We must form partnerships with existing developers to create and build affordable housing and workforce housing, that way we can leverage their money to build infrastructure.

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?

We need to have contracts with existing housing entities that would use city housing dollars to buy down the costs of apartments. We effectively used this model when we developed downtown, to encourage downtown growth.

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?

We need to encourage the development of mixed use development areas. This has been very successful in other cities.

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

Yes - absolutely.

### **Transparey:**

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?

1. Encourage more public input into the budget process.

2. Make budget available on the city website, that is easy for people to understand.

3. I think the CIP process needs to be changed to something that cannot be changed or delayed - they have to be addressed.

### **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.

I propose that our city use workforce training through community college and union apprenticeship programs. I designed and implemented a workforce program that included training, transportation, and child-care in 9 months. It raised 9 million dollars, and put 500 people to work on opening day. It won the Rice/UofH Metropolitan Award.

<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?

Yes, local hire helps build community.

## **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.

Yes, it builds sustainability of the workforce, which contributes to a stable economy, neighborhood, school, and quality of life.

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.

All bids should be open and transparent when tax-payer dollars are involved. I also am a proponent of a small business program instead of an MWBE program - it would be more inclusive, considering the diversity of our city.