



Statement on City of Houston's Climate Action Plan on the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day
April 22, 2020

The Mayor's release of a climate strategy is an important first step for the future of Houston's people, but it falls short on addressing equity and how Houston will achieve a just transition. Houstonians already on the frontlines of the climate crisis are experiencing disproportionate impacts to health and safety. For them, an equitable implementation of the plan is a matter of life or death. Success should be defined by and with impacted community members, not industry leaders. Polluters, not people, should pay for clean up; vulnerable communities must be prioritized.

The Plan does not go far enough to lay the groundwork for a new Houston economy that protects the safety of workers, reconstructs with clean energy infrastructure and expands opportunities. We envision a Houston that takes on a just transition where we retrain everyone according to fair standards and prioritize action based on need, capacity and natural assets. Now is the time to challenge our economic structures to reflect our shared values of fairness and resilience.

Crises that connect us on a global scale require us to take a collaborative approach that centers community voices and social justice. This pandemic shows us that our government has the resources to invest in our future now. Houston cannot afford to ignore what has been hiding in plain sight. We cannot repeat the national patterns of widening inequity in the wake of climate shocks.

Implementation of strategies to reduce green house gas emissions, increase solar and invest in transit must weave in the legacy of institutional and environmental racism. An equity scorecard should be created by frontline communities and impacted neighborhood leaders should be invited to guide implementation. As City Council votes to adopt actions in the Climate Action Plan, it should engage in a process to analyze existing and proposed policies through a lens of racial equity and climate justice. Every policy and funding decision should lead us to the future we want: a fair and just society where every one of us can thrive. Ensuring a comprehensive strategy turns into reality will require intentionality, holding hard conversations, embracing an orientation of learning and bold leadership.

We need leadership that understand how the history of redlining and racial segregation create the "pre-existing conditions" that harm our communities of color. Houston needs decision makers ready to act on the lessons we've learned from Katrina, Ike, Harvey and rewrite the rules to protect our most vulnerable. Today's plan release is important but what happens next will define Houston for generations to come.