

# A Vision for Houston

## A Future Houston

Our 21st-Century urban community has become a smart system reaching for the future without compromising our future ability to meet our needs and desires. Our technologies are efficient, self-regulating, and benign. We live harmoniously, reducing disparities in education, opportunity, and wealth.

We possess knowledge, human capital, economic goods, and natural resources. We use these to sustain us through many generations in our journey to the future. Our most valuable assets are our new generations, who are the future, and our elderly, who possess our wisdom and are our champions and pioneers.

Houston is a crossroads of culture and commerce for the Americas, the gateway to Space for all people. Our air and water are clean, we are healthier than we have ever been, and we have improved the health of our unusually rich ecosystem.

## Our Living Conditions

We live in a rich, vibrant environment with many convenient green spaces, some of which are relatively wild.

Our air and water are cleaner than the minimums required by government regulations. Our air and water goals are health-based.

Asthma and other respiratory problems are at levels found in distant rural communities.

Our many waterways have been returned to a natural state and now support many forms of recreation and wildlife. Streams and ponds link all parts of the area, cooling and cleaning area air.

The eight-county region has become a webbed metropolis, with education, commerce, and service areas spaced across the web.

The development of livable urban centers with diverse housing alternatives has stopped the spread of urban sprawl. Most of us work, shop, and go to school near our homes.

We have many pockets of self-sufficient communities where people walk to work and to the grocery store and local restaurants.

Our central city is the primary entertainment and cultural center for the region, and has become a residential area as well.

We have learned the incredible complexity of our unique ecosystem, and we have protected the prairies, forests, waterways, marshlands, and particularly the spectacular Galveston Bay system. We now use these areas for

*“The world will not evolve past its current state of crisis by using the same thinking that created the situation.”* — Albert Einstein

recreation and spiritual regeneration, rather than using them for private profit or as dumping sites for our wastes.

Destroying healthy trees requires community approval. We no longer allow loss of wetlands.

We have fierce pride in the appearance of our communities. Trash is rarely seen on roads or in parks, and public bins allow recycling of paper, plastic, glass, and aluminum.

The area is no longer dominated by parking lots, roads, and other amenities for automobiles.

Building codes require attention to albedo, which has significantly reduced temperatures and air pollution.

The scale of everything is much more human, comfortable, and manageable. All wires have been moved underground.

## Our Community

We are one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse regions on the planet, and as a result our lives are incredibly rich and creative.

Sustainability, efficiency, sufficiency, justice, equity, and community are high social values.

The majority of the people in our extended community understand that air, water, land, animals, and plants are part of our survival and must be considered in all decisions.

Our public officials are smart and caring, and

try to lead us toward a community that enables all of us to live safely and to find our own fulfillment in the work we do. These officials are honest, respectful, and more interested in doing their jobs than in keeping their jobs.

All residents have access to a good education and the option of college or specialized training.

All have access to good basic medical care without regard to ability to pay.

## Transportation

World-class, high-speed, zero-emission rail systems connect us with Austin Dallas/Ft. Worth, Galveston, and San Antonio. These vehicles have laptop hookups, dining facilities, reclining chairs, reading lights.

Our regional communities are also linked by modern, comfortable rapid transit systems with some of the same amenities as the inter-city transport.

Increasingly, we move around by means of fast, quiet public transportation that is free of pollution. We have stopped the building and widening of roads.

*Note: This document was developed by a Vision Working Group of the Foresight Project's Air Quality Task Force. The statement has its own life, independent of the Foresight Project, but has been submitted as a draft for consideration. It is not necessarily a reflection of the direction or work of the Foresight Project*

*After looking at plans and ideas in use in other cities, it became clear that the discussion of clean air needs to take place in the context of a vision of what we, as a community, want the Houston area to be. The encompassing “vision”, and the more loosely collected list of specific ways in which members of the group could envision Houston in the future, are meant to energize discussions about the region. Although the members of the group had differing perspectives on some of the specifics, all agreed that continuing to do what the area has been doing is not going to get us where we want to go. Comments and expansions are welcome at [sense@mediaplace.com](mailto:sense@mediaplace.com) or by mail at CEC, 3015 Richmond, Suite 270, Houston TX 77098. Acrobat PDF versions are available at [www.mediaplace.com/vision](http://www.mediaplace.com/vision). 10/27/98*