



The Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience

CEER Houston

November 2018

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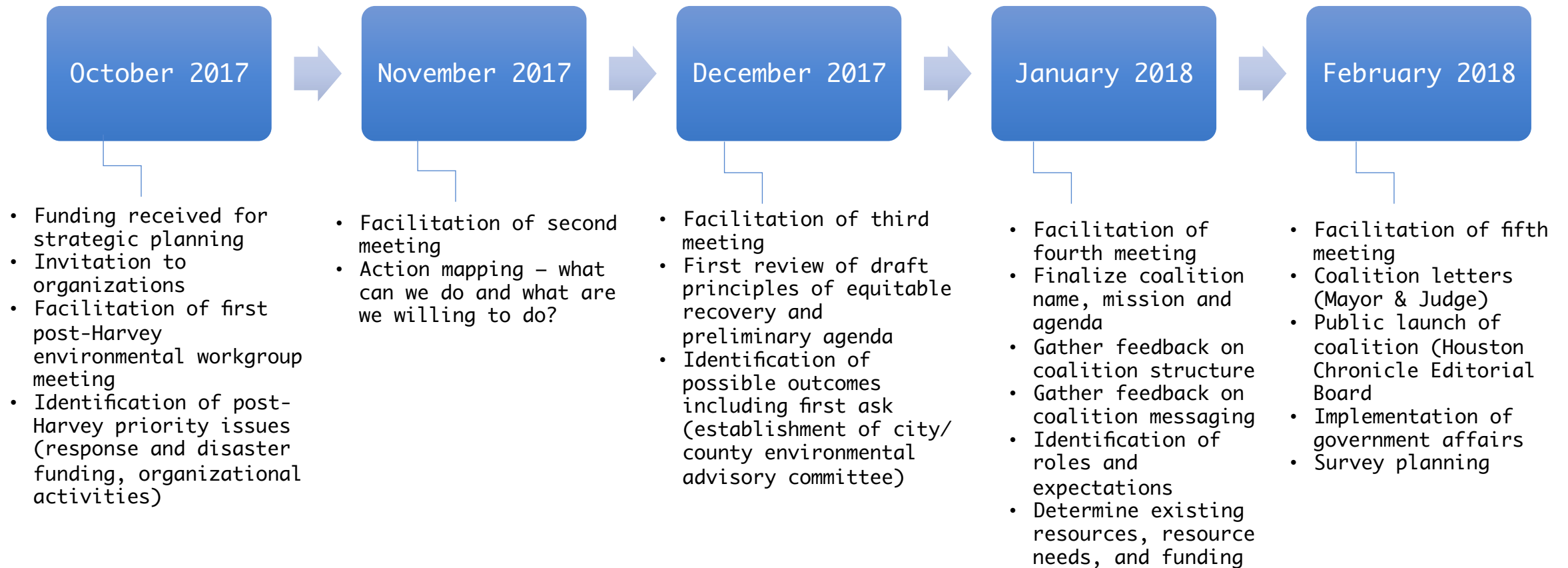
is a collaboration that raises awareness of the connection between pollution, place, and the public's health.

Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience

Hurricane Harvey did **unprecedented damage**, but it also offers us an **unprecedented opportunity**

to ensure that **equity** and **resilience** are the foundation upon which we rebuild to better protect the public's health from environmental hazards where we live, work, learn, play, and pray.

CEER Timeline



Why do we need CEER?



Residents washed away by Harvey wait for answers about pollution



Most homes damaged by Harvey were outside flood plain



Harvey exposes another gap between rich and poor

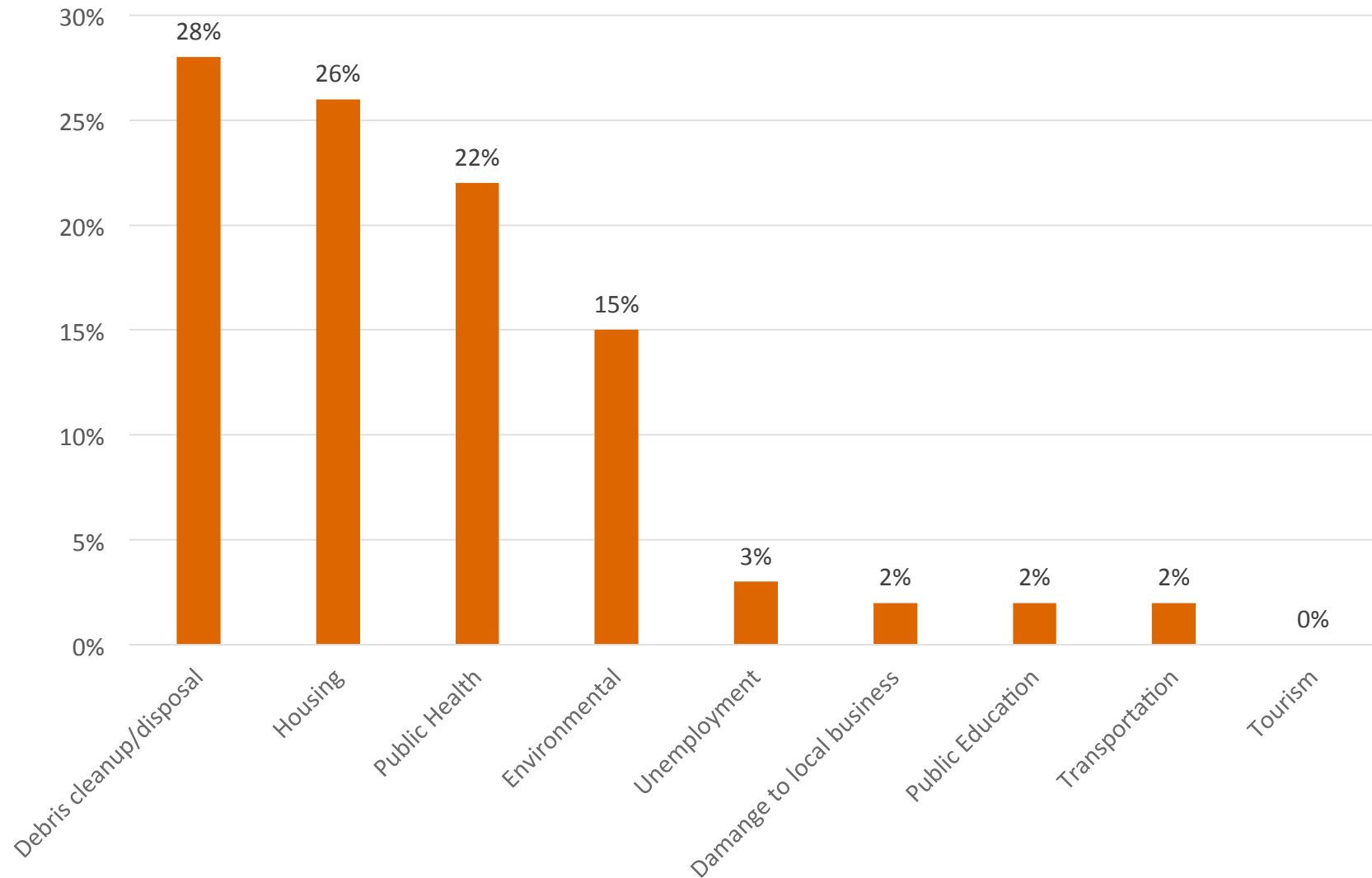


Arkema documents: Planning, mechanical failures led to fires



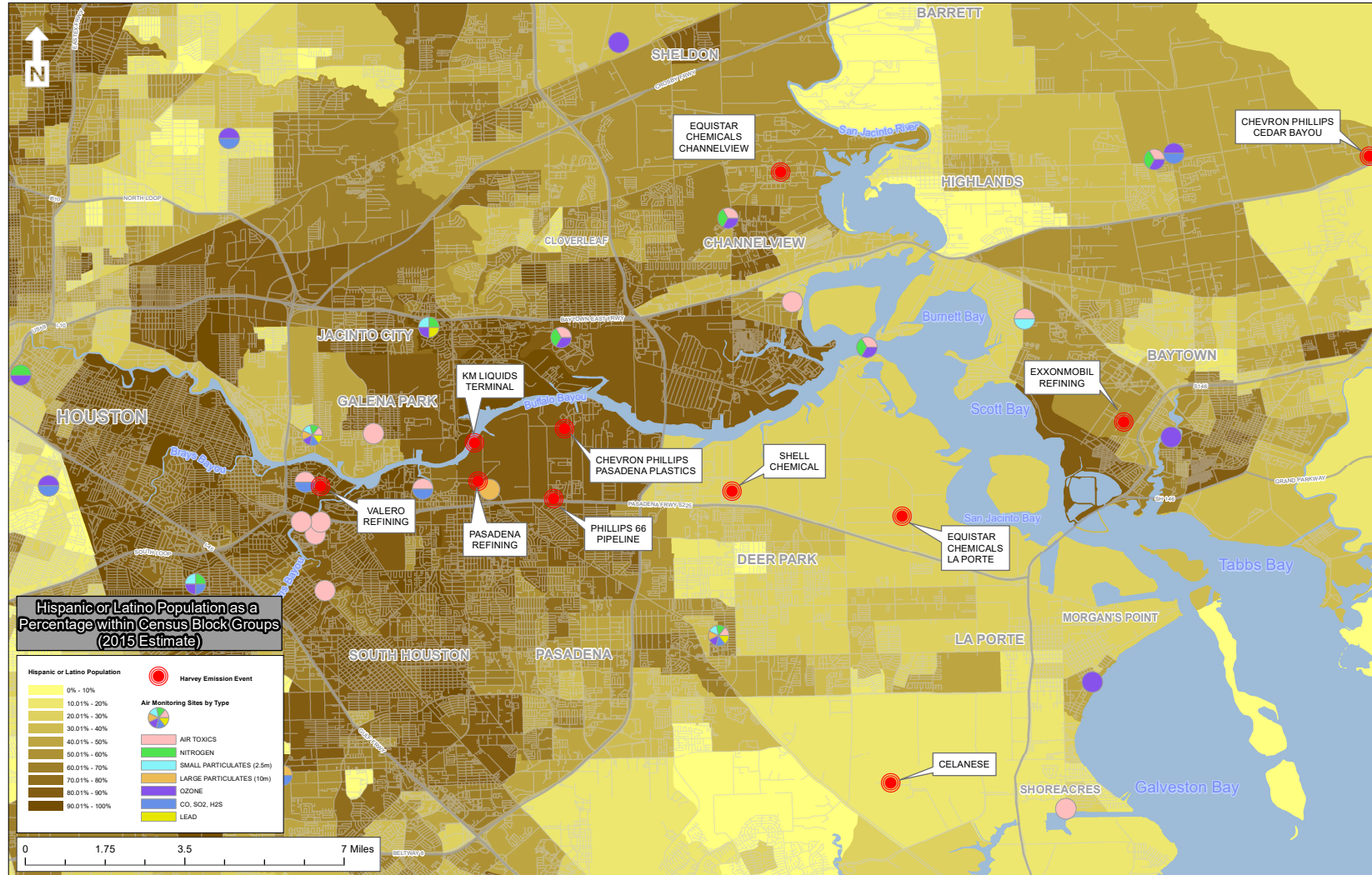
2 more chemical containers explode at Crosby chemical plant

Residents want action on our environment and our health

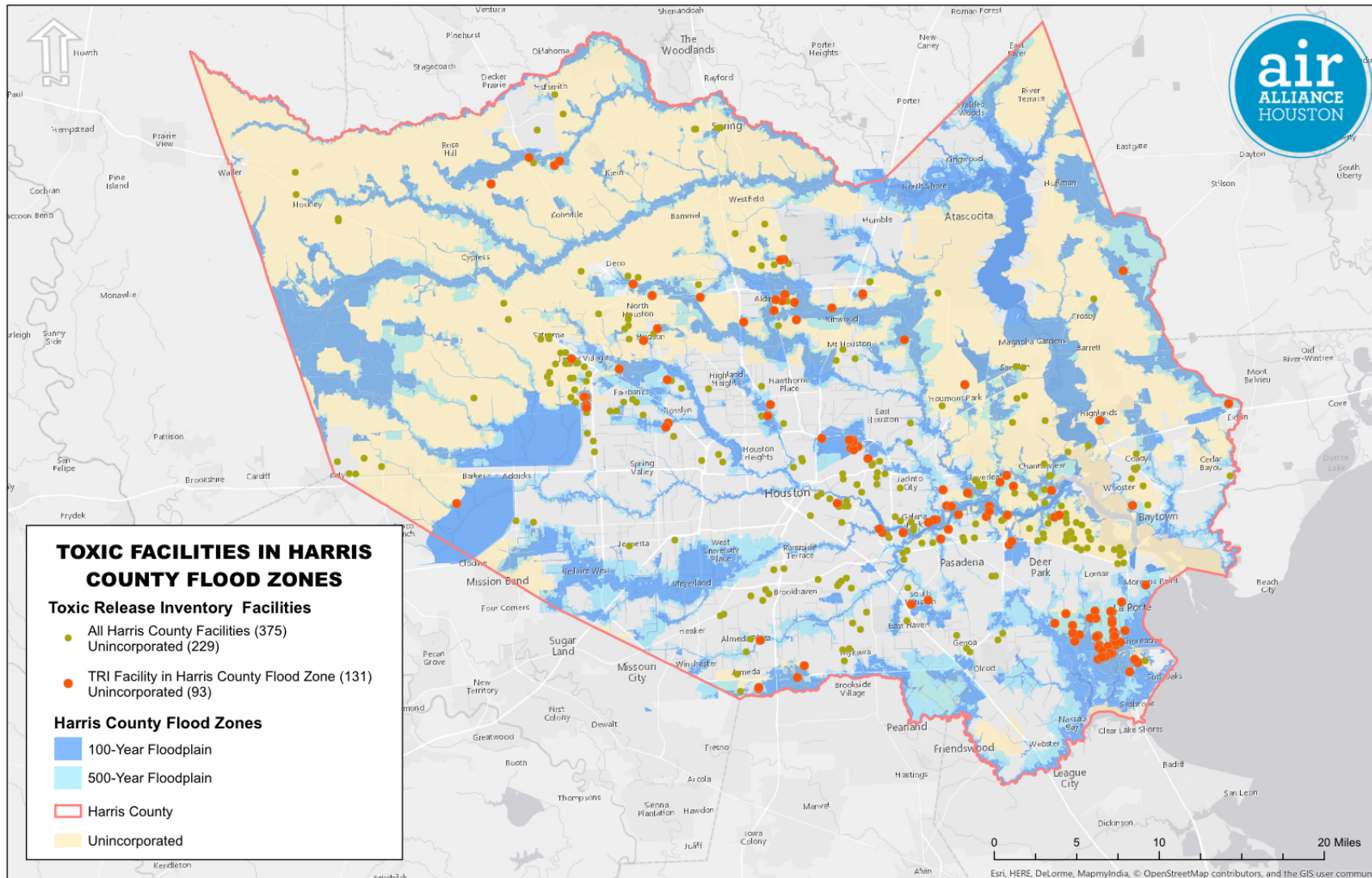


65% of voters are concerned about debris, environmental contamination, and public health post-Harvey

Industry reported Harvey-related air pollution.



Why do we need CEER?



Observed Challenges

- Inconsistent communication from officials with the public and organizations about public health threats posed by environmental hazards
- Insufficient deployment of resources to adequately sample air, water, and soil
- Questions of accountability due to state waiving environmental laws
- Health risks to local residents due to the siting of hazardous facilities near their homes
- Communities of color and low-income disproportionately impacted by environmental and public health burdens from the storm
- Insufficient communication of health and environmental risks to renters and buyers

Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience

Equity means all communities have access to the resources they need to thrive.

This includes access to and visibility in decision making that impacts their communities.

Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience

Resilience means ensuring that all communities have the infrastructure, network and other resources to withstand any kind of catastrophe, including environmental, economic, and other disasters.

Our Vision:

A region that is environmentally sustainable and economically strong where residents have the opportunity to live, work, learn, play, and pray free from environmental hazards.

Our Purpose:

- **Raise awareness of the connection between environment and community well-being**
- **Bring community voice to the table**
- **Work with decision makers to promote community, environmental health and resilience**

Our Call to Action

We call on our elected leaders, industry, and other decision makers to adopt **eight critical priorities**:

1. Focus on **Equity**
2. Focus on **Air**
3. Focus on **Water**
4. Focus on **Land**
5. Focus on **Waste & Recycling**
6. Focus on **Transparency**
7. Focus on **Displaced People**
8. Focus on **Resiliency**

Focus on Equity

The Problem

Some Houston communities – especially poor and minority neighborhoods – bear the brunt of the health and environmental impacts of disasters

*A 2016 report by the Union of Concerned Scientists report found the **cancer risk in Manchester is 22 percent higher** than for all of Houston...One air quality engineer dubbed Manchester "**ground zero for toxic air pollution** in Harris County."*

- The Houston Chronicle, January 7, 2018

The Solution

- Equity and needs-based investment at the heart of the recovery effort
- Regional body to address pollution, place and public health that operates under principles of equity

Focus on Our Air

The Problem

During Hurricane Harvey, an estimated **8 million pounds** of hazardous pollutants were released into the air.

*[The Arkema] spill... caused a release of chemicals into the air including ethylbenzene, which is **linked to cancer** but can also cause inner ear and **kidney damage**, as well as vertigo; trimethylbenzene, which can cause **chemical pneumonia and chronic bronchitis**; and tertbutyl alcohol, which can affect the kidneys and thyroid.*

- The Houston Chronicle, March 28, 2018

The Solution

- Keep hazardous facilities away from neighborhoods and schools
- Ensure facilities are prepared for emergencies
- Inform residents about hazards
- Empower local committees to address chemical safety issues

Focus on Our Water

The Problem

An estimated **700,000 gallons** of harmful chemicals leaked into our water during the disaster.

On Sept. 1, Arkema told the state environmental agency that material stored in a container on site was decomposing and mixing with stormwater, which caused a threat to Cedar Bayou. "It is unsafe to be in the vicinity, due to floodwaters," the records stated.

- The Houston Chronicle, March 28, 2018

The Solution

- Require facilities with hazardous material to plan and prepare for disasters
- Ensure that local industry facilities armor themselves
- Prioritize an outside audit on drinking water safety
- Fund additional enforcement

Focus on Our Land

The Problem

Extreme flooding during storms is worsened by a lack of natural infrastructure.

*In addition to creating habitat for wildlife, the prairie-wetlands, ranches, creeks, and other **green spaces** on the prairie **slow water heading downstream towards Houston**, providing time for floodwaters to recede. **As these prairie lands shrink, so does the ability to protect downstream citizens.***

- Katy Prairie Conservancy

The Solution

- Embrace and extend Bayou Greenways
- Fund land acquisition
- Incorporate low-impact and sustainable development
- Advance creation, restoration and conservation strategies

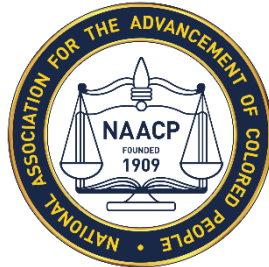
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CITIZENS' ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION



LONE STAR LEGAL AID



Focus on Water & Recycling

The Problem

In the aftermath of a storm, toxic debris can end up in our landfills and leach into the water supply.

*Environmental advocates met with representatives of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality this week to talk about debris disposal. “It sounded like [the state] was **relying on landfill operators to be vigilant**,” [EDF’s Elena] Craft says. “The state does not do the best job of active surveillance. **It’s nice to think that everyone is doing the right thing, but sometimes they don’t.**”*

- WIRED, September 17, 2017

The Solution

- Adopt a temporary debris management plan
- Enhance recycling opportunities for chemical waste
- Educate the public about curbside separation post-disaster

Focus on Transparency

The Problem

Houston communities are in the dark about what projects will be funded and which communities will be prioritized.

*The question for dozens of people, who a week after the storm still guard wrecked riverfront properties from marauders seeking scrap, is **whether their neighborhoods are now too contaminated to recover** - and whether it's safe to retrieve their remaining possessions. And **no one seems to be giving them any answers.***

- Houston Chronicle, September 10, 2017

The Solution

- Ensure open and formal processes with the public about disaster recovery investments

Focus on Displaced People

The Problem

More than 185,000 homes were damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Harvey, driving over 42,000 people to temporary shelters.

*Some have now **paid the tens of thousands of dollars** required to raise their houses. Many are moving or planning to. **Others are just stuck.***

Houston Chronicle, March 25, 2018

The Solution

- Develop affordable housing units safe from flooding and environmental hazards
- Redevelop outside of the floodplain
- Strengthen requirements for construction within the floodplain

Focus on Resiliency

The Problem

Many Houston communities lack the infrastructure and resources to withstand natural disasters.

*Three months after Harvey, **poor and minority communities are still struggling to rebuild** from a storm that disproportionately affected them... Among the biggest hurdles for poor, often-black or Hispanic communities were limited access to affordable housing, health care and flood insurance; non-existent emotional support networks that are integral to dealing with trauma; and the loss of hourly-wage jobs and the paychecks that come with them.*

- Chron.com, December 12, 2017

The Solution

- Commit to a region-wide climate action plan
- Ensure that investments reflect risks

Legislative Agenda 2019

- Equity
 - Review budgeted items for Harvey and ensure that communities of color, communities of low-income, or those less populated receive adequate recovery dollars.
- Transparency
 - Develop explicit project selection criteria to ensure the equitable distribution of disaster funds.
- Air
 - Allocate adequate funding to TCEQ to invest in mobile air monitoring units and create a surveillance plan to seek out and detect pollution hot spots during and after disasters,
- Water
 - Enhance County powers to allow regionalization of wastewater services through Emergency Management Section 418.102
- Waste
 - Create a user fee for groundwater by the oil and gas industry to fund the Texas Water Development Board's revolving fund on ensuring adequate safe drinking water supplies
- Resiliency
 - Enhance County powers to allow regionalization of wastewater services

The Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience

By focusing on **equity** and **resilience** through the built and natural world, we can ensure that all Houston residents will have the opportunity to lead healthy, productive lives regardless of their zip code.

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