



# GOAL 1 WE WILL SUPPORT HOUSTONIANS TO BE PREPARED FOR AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE.

Making Houston more resilient begins with supporting Houstonians with tools and resources to be resilient as individuals. Everyone experiences shocks and stresses in their own way—as a parent with children to care for, as the owner of a small business, as someone whose primary language is not English—and will need different resources to cope.

Goal 1 builds individual resilience by amplifying information, education, and awareness for Houstonians about the risks of potential emergencies and the resources available to prepare for and withstand those emergencies—and to assist their friends, families, and neighbors. To achieve this Goal, we have outlined concrete actions in the areas of personal finance, home improvements and retrofits, planning, insurance, education, and other actions that individual Houstonians can take to prepare for a range of disruptions. Many of these resources already exist and simply require better communication and outreach. In other cases, new programs will need to be developed to address identified gaps. Implementation of these actions relies on support from multiple public, private, and non-profit entities, but the impact is directed squarely at individual Houstonians.



**Provide at least 500,000 Houstonians with preparedness training by 2025.**

## 01 ENSURE HOUSTONIANS HAVE THE INFORMATION, SKILLS, AND CAPACITY TO PREPARE FOR ANY EMERGENCY.

**Expand preparedness education and risk awareness programs to help Houstonians be prepared and ready to support their neighbors in an emergency.**

Houstonians face emergencies on a regular basis. Whether that emergency is related to flooding, a chemical fire, a traffic crash, or something unexpected, the results can range from disruptive to deadly. Houstonians have a responsibility

to prepare and plan for any emergency with their families, co-workers, and neighbors. Specific actions can be taken at the household, building, or block level using existing community resources. Emergency preparedness and disaster

recovery training and resources will prevent loss of life and property, minimize disruption to livelihoods, reduce the emotional and economic costs of disruptions and disasters and allow Houston to recover more quickly and efficiently.

### SHOCKS/STRESSES



### TIMEFRAME



Short Term (2025)

### IMPLEMENTATION THEMES



### IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

COH / HCJO / HCC /  
Houston Businesses /

Academic Institutions /  
Business Associations and Chambers

### UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



#### 1.1 Build community through preparedness and disaster literacy.

In 95% of all emergencies, bystanders or even the victims themselves are the first to provide emergency help or to perform a rescue, according to Ready Houston. Emergency personnel are often overwhelmed during extreme weather emergencies and neighbors quickly become first responders. The City will work toward increasing the capacity of its residents to be self-reliant for the first 72 hours/7 days following an extreme weather emergency. Through strategic partnerships with non-profits such as United Way, Red Cross, Salvation Army, and AARP, we can leverage existing programs to build individual and community preparedness. Programs and resources like Ready Houston enable Houstonians to stay informed and safe before, during, and after a disaster, through education and information, such as how to make a disaster plan and emergency kit. The City will work to ensure that Ready Houston provides up-to-date, accurate, and accessible information that can help Houstonians prepare, including providing additional information about personal and property risk.

#### 1.2 Provide targeted Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training to residents in neighborhoods that experience chronic flooding.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training prepares an individual to help themselves, their family, and their neighbors in the event of a disaster. CERT is a 24-hour program taught by first responders over eight weeks that is free of charge and covers fire safety, disaster psychology, basic medical treatment, and light search and rescue. More than 42,000 volunteers in Greater Houston have received CERT training to support disaster response since 2002 and classes are held regularly. CERT classes are accessible, providing training in Spanish and Vietnamese, for the deaf and hard of hearing, and for the blind and visually impaired. The City will train a minimum of 5,000 additional Houstonians by 2025. The City will continue to partner with neighborhood and community groups including Super Neighborhoods, parent groups, faith-based organizations, and HOAs, and will prioritize training Houstonians in neighborhoods that experience chronic flooding.

Under the direction of local emergency responders, CERT teams help provide critical support by giving immediate assistance to victims, providing damage assessment information, and organizing other volunteers at a disaster site. During the Hurricane Harvey response, CERT members assisted at the distribution center and shelters, rescued neighbors, mucked and gutted neighborhoods, and set up feeding sites. The CERT program also builds strong working relationships between emergency responders and the people they serve.

### 1.3 Expand the outreach and engagement of the Houston Neighborhood Ready training program.

Neighborhood Ready was developed for communities to plan and prepare together before a disaster strikes; stay informed before, during, and after a disaster; and get to know their neighbors, particularly their elderly or ill neighbors who may not be able to plan independently for a disaster. This 90-minute training can be held by any Houstonian with up to 20 neighbors. Readyhouston.org has meeting kits available to order, with materials for neighbors and a facilitator's guide. The City will encourage 5,000 Houstonians to hold neighborhood meetings by 2025 to help their neighbors prepare—training nearly 100,000 Houstonians—and will track the neighborhoods where trainings occur.

### 1.4 Improve mobility during emergencies.

Hurricane Harvey flooded an estimated 500,000 cars, leaving people stranded with no evacuation options. While formal evacuation plans need to remain flexible and event-specific and are hard to develop in advance, Houstonians need to have access to information that improves mobility during emergencies. This can be achieved through increased public information on which roads flood, either by design or by historic flooding patterns, so Houstonians can make more informed travel decisions. Houston can now offer, thanks to advances in technology, real time or predictive applications for better navigation and improved warning systems, especially for all underpasses and freeways that have repetitive flooding. Identifying high ground and improving wayfinding and signage are also key for improving public understanding of safe routes. The City will support ongoing research and technology to achieve better, faster, and more accurate information on road hazards and conditions.

### 1.5 Expand flood insurance coverage.

Flood insurance is crucial for households to recover from flood damage, yet many are not aware of the role of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) or how flood insurance can help them recover from a disaster. The City will increase awareness and coverage of NFIP and encourage Houstonians to maintain flood insurance policies on their homes regardless of their location. The City can also work to increase the accessibility of flood insurance by making it less expensive through FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS) program. Through CRS, Houstonians can receive discounts on their flood insurance policies, depending on the community's rating within the program. Currently, the City of Houston is a Class 5 community, discounting premiums by 25%, but a Class 4 rating would provide a 30% discount. The City has set a goal of achieving a Class 4 rating by late 2021. Communities earn these ratings through actions that protect residents from flood hazards.

At the state level, reforms could focus on requiring flood insurance as part of the home-buying process, especially focusing on homes inside the floodplain or homes acquired without a mortgage. At the congressional level, the City and local partners could advocate to make insurance more affordable for those that have lower risk, including revising risk calculations and rates to include future impacts, not just historic ones.

### 1.6 Develop cash and direct assistance programs for vulnerable populations during disaster recovery.

The 2019 Kinder Houston Area Survey identified that 39% of Houstonians do not have \$400 for an emergency. However, \$400 in assistance could prevent the cascading impacts of disruption that happen when a disaster strikes. While many families are eligible for federal disaster assistance, those who are not eligible, whether because of employment, housing, or immigration status, are more vulnerable and in need of emergency cash assistance. The City and County will work with partners to develop a program that could expedite such support through gift cards or other tools that help to ensure that privately-raised disaster relief funding is prioritized for individuals who are ineligible for federal disaster relief programs, whether due to employment status, housing status, or immigration status. The City will also explore features like micro-banking that could pre-qualify households for the assistance and automatically deposit funds when the triggering event occurs.

### 1.7 Establish a corps of short-term case managers to fast-forward recovery programs after an event.

Recovery programs are strengthened when staffed by experienced personnel. Houston's experience has confirmed this: processes and programs that were established after Hurricane Harvey were used for Tropical Storm Imelda—just two years later. By establishing a group of case managers who are trained and ready to respond after the next event in Houston, we will continue to improve recovery programs. These case managers could be non-essential government employees or people whose job would be disrupted by a disaster. A proactive case management program would transfer institutional knowledge from one recovery effort to the next.

### 1.8 Introduce culturally-informed disaster case management.

By any measure, Houston is staggeringly diverse. 1.6 million immigrants call this city home and 140 languages are spoken in Houston homes. 35% of Houstonians do not speak English well or at all, and almost 50% of our undocumented population and people with permanent residency lack English proficiency. To ensure an equitable recovery, the region must invest in culturally competent

disaster case management. This includes prioritizing grassroots organizations deeply rooted in immigrant communities and including them in case management funding and planning systems. Many immigrants report not fully trusting the confidentiality of some assistance programs, so having case managers from those communities increases the likelihood that immigrant communities will receive the benefit of recovery programs and services. By working with

local universities and other partners, we will increase the number of case managers that are multilingual in keeping with the region's demographics and to reflect the populations that they serve. Language capacity should begin with Spanish, French, Vietnamese, Chinese, Urdu, and Arabic.

## CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA "DAY ZERO"

Cape Town provides a timely example of how individuals can change their behavior quickly to be more prepared for an uncertain future. The mayor of Cape Town predicted in October 2017 that the city would run out of water by March 2018. The city made world headlines as "Day Zero" approached after experiencing the driest three-year period since the 1930s. However, the city's residents, community organizations, and businesses mobilized to take action to reduce consumption, develop response strategies, and to tap into alternative water sources which ultimately pushed "day zero" to 2019, which was enough time for the immediate crisis to be averted. A key part of the success was the local government's willingness to share information and partner with stakeholders and residents to form a collective response to the threat at hand. The approach had a positive impact on city governance and operations that continues to be felt today.



Photo: City of Cape Town