



## 2025 Annual Report

Center for Houston's Future had a very busy and eventful 2025. As we celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we engaged a broad swath of the community to create a vision of what Houston can aspire to be in another 25 years; completed our clean hydrogen initiative; kicked off an exciting new initiative on holistic, lifelong brain health; hosted two robust Business/Civic Leadership cohorts with innovative content; and continued our record of community engagement and thought leadership with a series of events, including those featuring Leadership alumni.

Founded as a 501(c)3 in 2000 with the goal of deepening the bench and widening the circle of leadership in Houston, Center for Houston's Future has focused on making our region a top global community in which to work and live. Twenty-five years later, we continue to look "over the horizon" at global, national, and local trends that will shape the future of our region. Here is a look at our strategic initiatives, Business/Civic Leadership Forum, and community engagement & events in 2025.

### STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

**Clean Hydrogen:** We successfully wound down the past several years of work on clean hydrogen, which was split into three different streams. Our hydrogen hub work transitioned to HyVelocity's corporate owners. The Center continued developing a regional Gulf Coast clean hydrogen ecosystem via our Hydrogen Steering Committee throughout 2025. With both government and market forces uncertain, we concluded we would no longer continue this focus. The Center's work and impact, however, will live on as we successfully completed our 2025 obligations to Committee members and transferred much of the ongoing work to partners, including some tranches to Houston Energy Transition Initiative. (HETI).

The third workstream was a workforce focused project funded by JPMorganChase to support the Resiliency Workforce Collaboration. We built on research conducted in collaboration with Accenture and UpSkill Houston, showing that building a resilient skilled workforce requires significant growth in middle skill workers to support both the current energy workforce and new energy transition jobs. The report showed that the Houston region would require a new strategy to fill anticipated workforce needs by training and supporting traditionally underemployed groups and by aligning training with employer-identified needs. The original project focused on clean hydrogen jobs. On

reflection, the same lessons are relevant more broadly across the energy and resiliency landscape. We have completed a handbook addressing future energy jobs and how to fill them with our existing workforce. The handbook will be shared with the RWC and other stakeholders and be available on our website.

Driving the Future was also closed out in 2025. Started in the fall of 2021, the Center and Children's Museum Houston collaborated to bring hands-on, interactive lessons about low-carbon energy to Houston area school children. In these 4+ years, we have directly reached more than 1000 students at 7 school districts and almost 30 campuses with our 6-8 session after school or summer school curriculum.

With sponsorships from Mitsubishi Corporation, bp, Calpine, CenterPoint Energy Foundation, Chevron, Mitsubishi Corporation (Americas) and Topsoe, we provided materials, teacher training, and lesson plans that introduced students to types and forms of energy, hydrogen in the universe, molecules, different sources of energy and more. The impact of this work reaches beyond the actual class sessions, as the curriculum, videos, materials and teacher training continue to influence and support learning at the sponsored schools.

Many more students and their families were reached via the three special day- or week-long events (2022, 2023, 2025) at Children's Museum Houston as part of their Wonder Weeks series. We expect the lesson plans and curriculum to continue to inform students learning through Children's Museum Houston outreach programs.

**Vision 2050:** In addition to looking at the last 25 years, we looked ahead 25 years with our Vision 2050 initiative. We solicited hundreds of submissions from diverse groups and leaders across our region and considered the attributes of other great cities to create a strong list of goals for the future. From that broad set of goals, we selected five areas for a deep dive and formed teams of experts and community leaders that met over a period of months to create a portrait of possibilities for our region.

Focusing on four broad areas: **Prosperity, Place, Pillars, and Perception**, we identified high level aspirations and presented more detailed visions for each.

**Prosperity:** Our economy will provide an abundance of opportunities with new industries and innovation, fueled by a highly skilled workforce and ever-innovative education learning systems. Adding to our growth, we will become known as an attractive destination for short-stay tourism.

**Place:** Our region will feature a vibrant urban core with attractive surrounding communities. We will preserve our relatively low cost of housing by increasing density coupled with shared green spaces. We will have abundant trees and beautiful bayous that create green corridors to connect communities.

**Pillars:** These fundamental infrastructures support our aspirations for prosperity and place, including mobility, resilience and air quality. We envision that our mobility offerings catch up to and meet the needs of our growing population. Flooding is no longer commonplace as heavy rain runoff moves through drainage tunnels. Power is stable year-round. Additional green spaces and trees, along with innovations to improve mobility, commuting and traffic flow, result in improved air quality.

**Perception:** Our region is recognized internationally as a vibrant, cosmopolitan city with outstanding arts and culture, and attractions – including our top-flight Main Attraction. We will be known as a top place to visit for short-stay tourism. This will be the natural outcome of achieving our aspirations for prosperity, place, and pillars.

The spirit of Vision 2050 has been to build on our strengths, address our issues, and craft a compelling vision for our region. We hope Vision 2050 paints a picture of our possibilities and provides a roadmap to an exciting, enriching future for our region. Please visit [futurehouston.org](http://futurehouston.org) for a more detailed look at what we imagine.

An additional goal of Vision 2050 was to identify the next area of study for the Center, as well as a new tentpole industry for the region in addition to energy, healthcare, advanced manufacturing and aerospace. We found an exciting, worldwide initiative on brain health that promises to enhance human flourishing and spur economic growth. This is the advent of the brain economy. The Center will focus on this as our key strategic initiative in 2026 and beyond.

Dubbed **Project Metis**, this initiative will position the Houston region as a leader in the emerging worldwide brain economy.



**PROJECT  
METIS**

We will leverage the region's institutions and resources to make significant advances in brain health. Our vision is that Houston/Galveston becomes the global leader, serving as a "lighthouse" for the world.

To capture the opportunity, we are aligning key resources and strategic partners to collaborate and lead an initiative on brain health modeled on the structure used by HETI (Houston Energy Transition Initiative). Following a similar blueprint, we can achieve a meaningful, measurable impact.

Led by our founding co-chairs, representing The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB), Rice University and Memorial Hermann Health System, we are convening leading medical institutions, start-ups, research institutions, capital sources and non-profits. Within a larger Steering Team, we are forming Working Teams focused on various topics, organized by life stage (education, working years, healthy aging) and cross-cutting topics around science/medical developments and innovation/commercialization for emerging technologies.

Our efforts will include holding periodic workshops and events to broaden awareness, supporting the development of innovation hubs, recruiting VCs and PE firms for emerging technology, and identifying quick wins and long-term opportunities. We'll also connect with national efforts and other organizations to identify effective public policy, attract new companies to the region and support a skilled workforce, and to become a leader in the brain health economy worldwide. We will establish a brain health index for the region that would identify relevant parameters and how to measure and capture that information.

This is an exciting opportunity for the Center and for the region that is likely to have an impact on how we work and live for decades to come.

## **Business/Civic Leadership Forum**



The excitement generated by the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the social media features of the top alums, and all of these outreach events, along with diligent recruitment by Forum leadership, resulted in record attendance at both Spring and Fall Forums.

Forum participants network, learn about regional issues from subject matter experts and community leaders, and embark on small group learning journeys to take a deep dive into an area of interest. Participants explore key issues with expert speakers on subjects including Houston's history, the regional business climate, affordable housing, immigration, early childhood education, economic mobility, and others. Learning journey topics in 2025 included the future workforce, education, healthcare, AI, infrastructure, and others. Learning journey presentations continue to be creative and range from entertaining skits and games to more serious and personal takes on mental health issues in the community.

The Center works to expand the reach and impact of the Leadership Forum with alumni engagement activities, including dedicated cohort WhatsApp chat groups, social events for continued networking and learning, many organized by the grads themselves, and ongoing opportunities and invitations to participate in Center events. We had excellent alumni participation at all the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary events.



We served 77 leaders in the 2025 forums and are well positioned for another successful year in 2026, as we convene our 50<sup>th</sup> cohort, a significant milestone in the history of the program and organization, bringing our alumni network to more than 1,500 leaders.



## Community Engagement/Events

To commemorate **our 25 years of leadership and learning**, the Center hosted a series of events featuring our top alumni.

- We began by identifying 75 top alumni from 25 years of classes. These Leaders Who Stand Apart were recognized at a special reception in February, and Forum alums were asked to select the top 25 from that group.





- Women Leaders Who Stand Apart were featured at the Junior League in March with top 75 alums Donna Cole, Cullen Geiselman, Winell Herron, and Lharissa Jacobs, moderated by alumna Frances Castaneda-Dyess.



- Innovators Who Stand Apart featured Bobby Tudor, Rives Taylor, and Adeeb Barqawi. Moderator Kim Sterling, also a top alum, helped draw parallels of what innovation looks like in different fields at this Ion event in May.



- In June, we met at Brennan's to enjoy a discussion by two top alums in the hospitality industry, Alex Brennan-Martin and Brock Wagner, and to reveal our Eugene Vaughan Civic Leadership Award winner for 2025 would be George DeMontrond, III.





- September saw an in-depth discussion of leadership with Ric Campo and David Gow at the Junior League.



We were also fortunate to have bp once again as a Summer Salon sponsor. We hosted an enthusiastic crowd at Junior League of Houston on July 29 to network and consider challenges and opportunities of digital technology and AI in energy innovation. Shobhan Mani of bp, Dr. Debalina Sengupta from University of Houston's Energy Transition Institute, and Matthew McDermott from Newfound Materials made up our expert panel.



In November, our year of outreach culminated in a record-breaking Dinner and Conversation, attended by almost 400 guests, and honoring George DeMontrond III as the Vaughan Award recipient, as well as our top 25 alumni.



The program also served as the official launch of our new initiative, Project Metis. Metis, a holistic initiative focused on life-long brain health, will bring together leading medical and academic institutions, corporations, and foundations to design brain health solutions that will enhance human flourishing and support economic growth. CEO David Gow led a panel of experts in discussion about the economic and human opportunities. Our project-leading organizations—UTMB, Rice, and Memorial Hermann—were represented on the panel by Dr. Jochen Reiser, MD PhD, Prof. Christopher M. Johns-Krull, PhD, and Dr. Jamie McCarthy, MD.

All our events were well attended by alums and community, re-engaging and energizing our connections in the community.

As we start 2026, we are excited by the promise of what we can achieve – from Project Metis, impact from Vision 2050, continuing to grow our network of purpose-driven Business/Civic Leadership Forum alumni, and hosting thought-provoking events.