

88th Texas Legislative Session

Galveston County Legislative Priorities

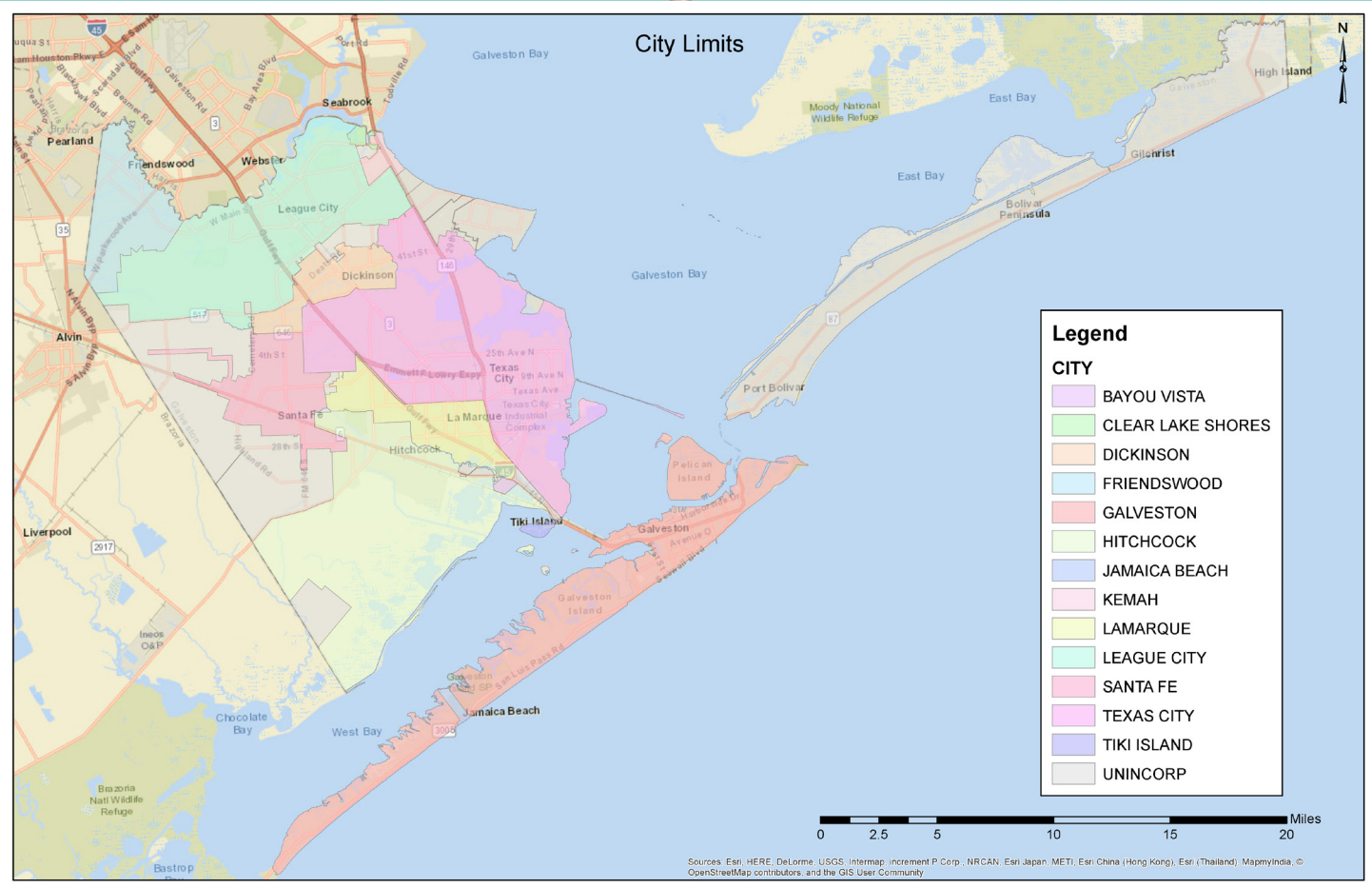


www.GalvestonCountyTx.gov

Galveston County and the State of Texas are thriving because of our commitment to individual rights and our pro-business governance. We ask the 88th Texas Legislature to stay true to our shared values by reducing taxes through actual property appraisal reform, promoting business growth, and prioritizing infrastructure.



Mark Henry
Galveston County Judge



Galveston County Facts:

More than seven million tourists visit every year

Large industrial base that includes Dow, Marathon, Valero, and INEOS

Two international ports with Port of Galveston ranking as the 4th busiest cruise port in North America

Home of the University of Texas Medical Branch and Texas A&M Galveston (the state's only maritime academy)

17th most populous county in Texas

Drainage Infrastructure & Coastal Protection



Funding for Drainage and Flood Mitigation Projects

Coastal communities in the State of Texas require support to safeguard their residents, homes, and small businesses from severe rain events such as Hurricane Harvey. In addition to storm surge protection, effective drainage systems are essential in mitigating the damage caused by these storms.

The Lower Clear Creek and Dickinson Bayou Watershed Study, recently included in the federal Water Resource Development Act, has received widespread local support. We urge the State Legislature to remain actively involved in the planning and funding of this crucial initiative.

Galveston County has developed a Master Drainage Study that identifies important flood mitigation projects within the community. Some of these projects will require state participation to be successfully implemented.



Funding for Beach Dune Nourishment



It is imperative that the Texas Legislature fully fund the Statewide Beach Maintenance Fund. If this fund is not appropriately funded, our beaches may be lost due to erosion, which would impact the millions of Texans who live on the coast. In addition, the loss of our beaches would negatively impact tourism, as they are a major attraction for visitors. Coastal communities rely on tourism dollars to thrive, and the loss of this revenue would be devastating.

Currently, local entities are being forced to bear the responsibility of maintaining our beaches without adequate funding from the state. It is essential that the state provide the necessary resources to ensure the preservation of our beaches, both for the benefit of residents and for the continued success of the tourism industry.

Continued Support for Coastal Storm Surge Protection System



Coastal communities in Texas require support to protect their homes, small businesses, and infrastructure from severe storms. As the Coastal Storm Surge Protection System progresses within the federal government, it is essential that the State of Texas remains engaged and committed to the project.

A major hurricane hitting Galveston County and the Houston region would have devastating consequences for the local community, as well as widespread impacts across the state and nation.

Government Reform

Property Tax and Appraisal Reform

Texans require real property tax relief through a reformed property appraisal system that addresses the large annual assessment increases. The current system places a significant tax burden on property owners, who may be at risk of being appraised out of their homes and businesses.



Elimination of the Galveston County Treasurer

We ask the Texas Legislature to pass a joint resolution that puts a constitutional ammendment to eliminate the position of Galveston County Treasurer to the vote of the people during the November 2023 election. The current Galveston County Treasurer ran on the platform of eliminating the office and this measure has unanmious support of the Commissioners Court. There is broad support across Galveston County to have the elimination of Galveston County Treasurer's Office put on the ballot for a vote.



Funding for Mental Health

Texas is facing a mental health and substance abuse crisis and state assistance is needed to help local jurisdictions. Funding for mental health, especially for mental health beds and treatment, is crucial. Community centers, such as the Gulf Coast Center in Galveston County, need additional funding and support to expand services and address the needs of Texas residents.



Navigation District Reform



We recommend that Section 62.1071 of the Texas Water Code be amended to prohibit all navigation districts from owning real property outside of their defined jurisdiction. This reform is necessary to prevent negative impacts on neighboring communities and to promote economic growth. It is important that Texas' taxing entities do not engage in land grabs that stifle development and undermine the state's reputation as a beacon of economic opportunity

Eliminate Unfunded Mandates

Preserving individual rights and maintaining local control are essential for a strong and vibrant Texas. Unfunded mandates, however, place an undue burden on counties, cities, and local businesses. We request that the Texas Legislature eliminate mandates that financially burden local entities without providing assistance from the state.



Economic Development



Regulatory Reform and Pro-Business Environment

Though Texas has a reputation as the most pro-business state, businesses in Texas still face unnecessary barriers to growth due to outdated and burdensome state regulations. We call on the Texas legislature to prioritize regulatory reform and take action to establish an even more pro-business environment. By streamlining processes and reducing bureaucracy, we can promote economic development and job creation in our state.

We also urge collaboration with businesses of all sizes to understand their needs better and ensure that regulatory policies support the growth and success of all companies in Texas.



Prioritize Workforce Training



To meet the demands of a growing economy, our businesses require trained workers. Robust education and workforce training programs, such as those offered at College of the Mainland and Galveston College, are crucial in helping Texans obtain high-paying jobs. We urge the Texas Legislature to collaborate with institutions of higher education and trade schools to provide sufficient and appropriate funding for programs focused on training the next generation of Texas workers. By expanding these critical workforce training programs and working closely with the business community, we can ensure that all the needs of our economy are met.

Windstorm and Flood Insurance Reform

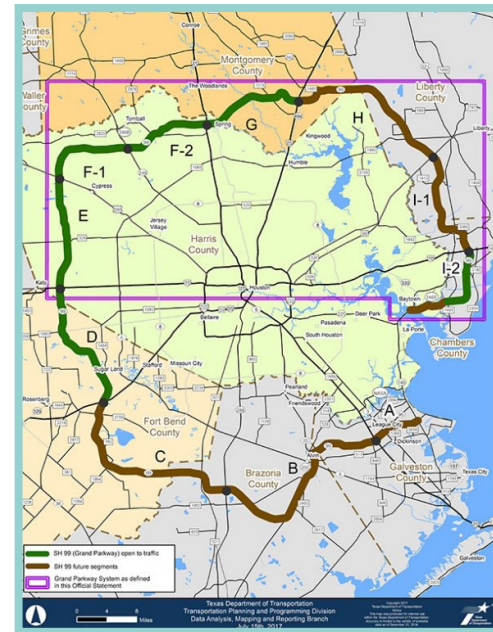


Galveston County and other coastal Texans are facing increased windstorm and flood insurance rates. This makes it expensive to live along the coast and can price many residents out of their homes. Predictable rate structures are necessary to ensure that Texas home and business owners can continue to live, work, and play along the coast. It is important that we take action to address this issue and ensure that residents of coastal communities can afford to stay in their homes.

Infrastructure

Support Completion of the Grand Parkway (SH99)

Segments A, B, and C of the Grand Parkway are essential for the continued expansion and development of Galveston County and the Greater Houston region. The completion of the Grand Parkway will not only provide a much-needed hurricane evacuation route but also contribute to the region's economic development. Any further delays in the project will increase its cost and hinder growth. It is important that we prioritize the completion of the Grand Parkway to ensure the continued success and prosperity of our region.



Prioritize Completion of I-45 and SH146 Projects



I-45 and SH146 are vital transportation arteries in Galveston County. These roadways serve as economic drivers and lifesaving hurricane evacuation routes. The Texas Department of Transportation is currently expanding both highways to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion. We appreciate the state's commitment to Galveston County and request that these projects be prioritized and completed as soon as possible. It is important to maintain and improve our transportation infrastructure to support the growth and success of Texas.

Funding for Ports and Waterways

Texas ports and waterways are critical infrastructure for our state's economy and international trade. Adequate funding is necessary to maintain and improve these assets, and to ensure that they can meet the demands of our growing population and economy. We call on the Texas Legislature to prioritize funding for our ports and waterways.



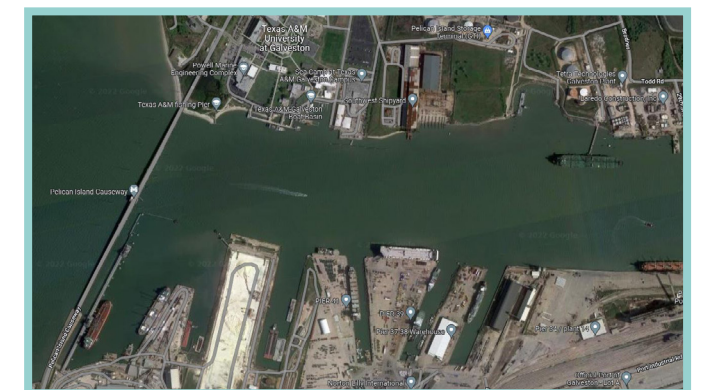
Improvements to Hwy 87 on Bolivar



Highway 87 is a hurricane evacuation lifeline for the residents of the Bolivar Peninsula. This highway continually washes out and is in dire need of being raised to avoid flooding during weather events and high tides. While TXDOT has made improvements, additional work is needed to ensure resiliency.

Funding for Pelican Island Bridge

Pelican Island is the last large piece of undeveloped industrial land on the Gulf Coast. It is connected to Galveston Island via the Pelican Island Bridge. We ask that the funding for replacement of this bridge be protected and that the structure be added to the list of TXDOT maintained bridges.



Tourism



Galveston County is home to a wide range of tourist attractions, including museums, galleries, and parks, in addition to its beautiful beaches and outdoor recreation opportunities. Visitors can learn about the state's rich history at the Bryan Museum or the Galveston Railroad Museum. They can also explore the many charming boutiques and restaurants on the historic Strand.

One of the county's most popular outdoor attractions is the Texas City Dike, a massive rock breakwater that extends into Galveston Bay and offers stunning views of the surrounding area. The Dike is a popular spot for fishing, birdwatching, and picnicking, and it's also home to a number of small businesses and restaurants.

Another draw for tourists is Galveston County's many waterways, which offer a variety of recreational activities such as boating, kayaking, and fishing. These waterways are also home to a diverse array of plant and animal life.



State Travel and Tourism Funding

Tourism has a major impact on the economy of Texas. We call on the Texas Legislature to provide adequate funding for Texas tourism marketing efforts and programs.

Galveston County is a vital part of the tourism industry in Texas. More than seven million tourists visit Galveston every year and the businesses that serve these visitors are ambassadors for all of Texas.

By investing in tourism, we can help these businesses thrive into the future, ensuring that they can continue to welcome visitors to our beautiful state and county.





Galveston County Legislative Priorities 2023

88th Texas Legislative Session

We, the Commissioners Court of Galveston County, support the following Legislative measures:

Property Appraisal Reform: Provide real property tax relief by reforming the property appraisal system that drives large yearly assessment increases and creates heavy tax burdens on property owners.

Elimination of County Treasurer Office: Reduce the size and cost of local government by allowing Galveston County voters to decide on eliminating the office of the Galveston County Treasurer.

SH 99/Grand Parkway Project: Support the completion of the Grand Parkway that will serve as an important hurricane evacuation route, increase mobility, reduce traffic congestion, and increase economic development.

Navigation District Reform: Ensure no navigation district owns property outside of their defined jurisdiction. Specifically, guarantee that Galveston County is free from ownership of outside ports and navigation districts by amending Sec. 62.1071 of the Water Code.

Drainage Projects: Provide additional funding for drainage projects in Galveston County, including support for projects in the lower Clear Creek and Dickinson Bayou watersheds.

County Ordinance Power in Unincorporated Areas: Pass effective solutions that grant counties limited ordinance powers to mitigate flood control, nuisance abatement, and protect transportation infrastructure and public safety.

Provide Additional Nuisance Abatement Authority to Counties: Amend Transportation Code Subchapter A, Sec. 396.001 to include automotive shops in the category with automotive wrecking and salvages yards.

Mental Health Funding: Provide funding for mental health and substance abuse programs, especially for mental health beds and treatment.

Additional Funding for Specialty Courts: Increase support and funding for specialty courts that improve outcomes for justice-involved residents that suffer from mental health challenges or substance abuse.

Protect Funding for Pelican Island Bridge: Add the Pelican Island Bridge to the Texas Department of Transportation's list of maintained bridges and protect the \$57.5 million currently allocated to replacing the bridge. This bridge connects Pelican Island and Galveston Island.

Expand OSSF Allowances in Administrative Code: Encourage additional development in unique areas, such as the Bolivar Peninsula, by adding language to 30 Administrative Code, Chapter 285, Subchapter A, Rule 285.4.

Public Notices: Expand the allowance of digital public notices.

County Magistrates: Amend Sec. 2.09 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure to allow the Galveston County Commissioners Court to directly hire magistrates.

Uniform Work Hours: Amend Sec. 157.021 of the Texas Local Government Code to reduce the population threshold from 355,000 to 350,000 or allow usage of Census estimates to determine population.

Approved By Galveston County Commissioners Court on 09/06/2022



Collaboration of:

County of Galveston

Galveston County Business Taskforce

Bolivar Peninsula Chamber of Commerce

Dickinson Chamber of Commerce

Friendswood Chamber of Commerce

Galveston Regional Chamber of Commerce

Hitchcock Chamber of Commerce

League City Regional Chamber of Commerce

Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce

Texas City/La Marque Chamber of Commerce



County of Galveston

