

State Of the Community Report : Liberty County, Texas

Liberty County: Background

Liberty County, Texas is located in southeastern Texas and part of the Houston metropolitan area. The County is bisected by the Trinity River from North to South and US Highway 90 from East to West. The County has a very strategic location, along the Trinity River, allowing access to the Port to the South, and along US Highway 90, connecting Houston to Beaumont.



The County was officially formed in 1836 as part of the Republic of Texas. The City of Liberty was annexed in 1837 and made the county seat. Originally, the County was much larger, encompassing all of what is currently Tyler County and parts of what later became Hardin, Chambers, San Jacinto, and Polk counties. The County's early development focused on agriculture, especially timber production, since timber could be floated down the Trinity River to Houston-area ports. In 1901, oil production began and has continued since. Many other minerals are found within the County, including: lignite, iron ore, sulfur, brick clay, salt, lime, glass sand, and gas.

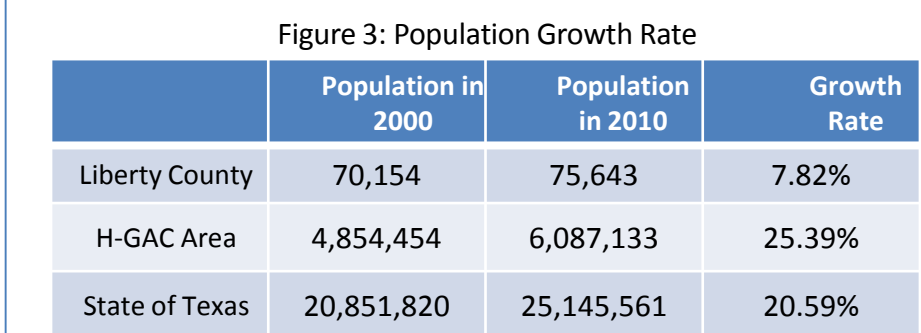
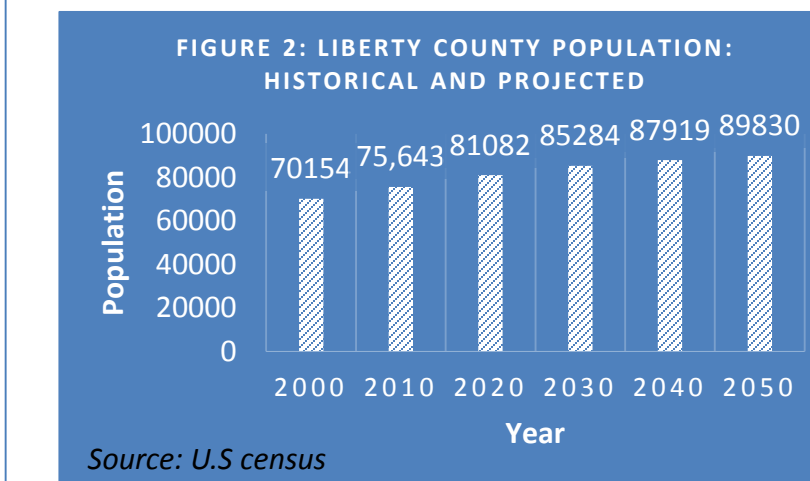


Soil within the County is very high quality and between 40 and 50 percent of the land is considered to be prime agriculture land. Soil types include sandy, sandy loam, black sandy, and black clay, characteristics of being located near the Texas coast. The subtropical climate is also characteristic of the County's coastal location, with very high humidity levels and average rainfall around 51 inches. Temperature varies throughout the year from between about 40 to 94 degrees Fahrenheit.

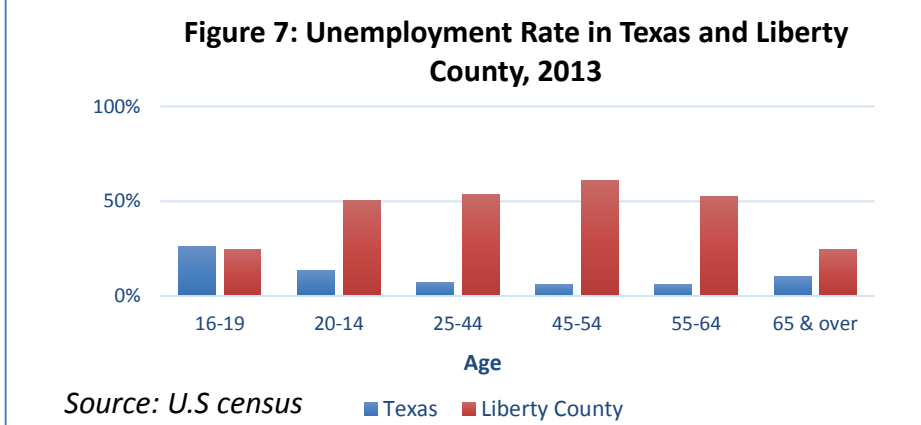


Demographics

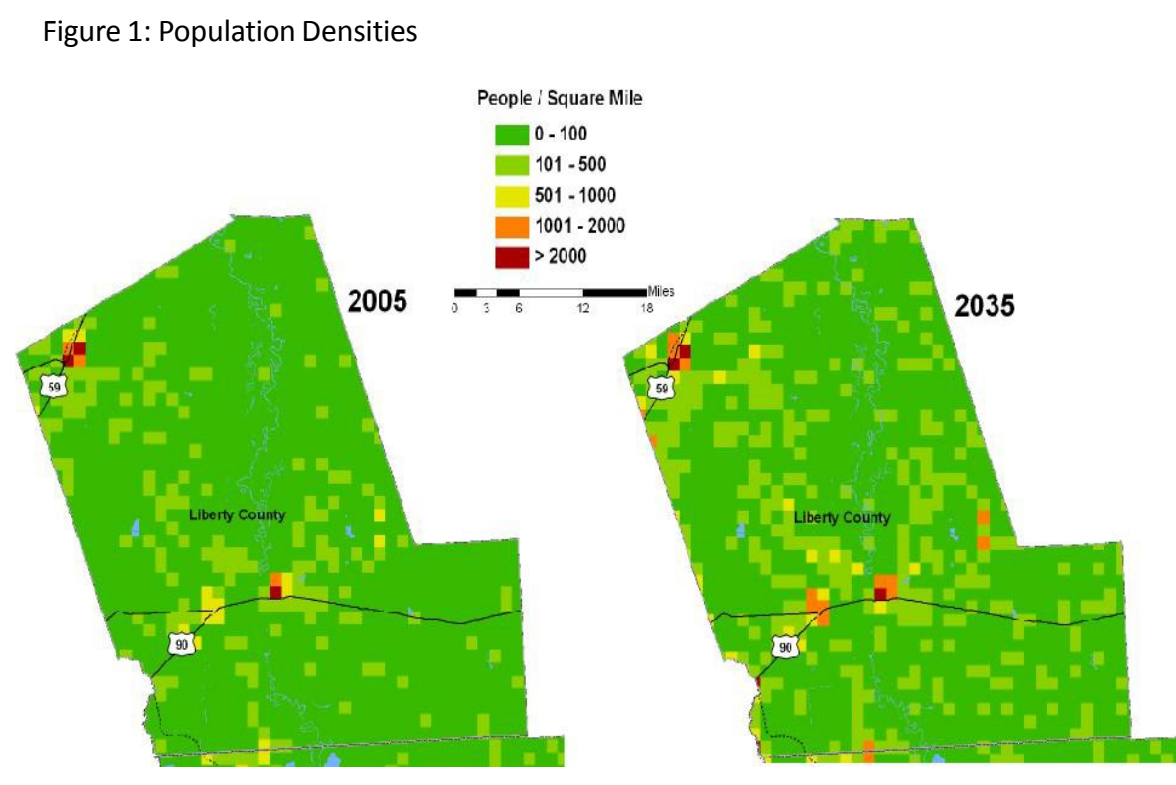
The population of Liberty County is clustered around the two major cities: the City of Liberty in the central of the county, and in the City of Cleveland, in the northwest of the county. With the growth the population, according to the projected density in 2035, another city in Liberty County, Dayton, would become another residents' cluster. (the right below figure)



The population age between 45 is the main of group of both Texas and Liberty County. The older age is much smaller than the younger. When compared the old age between different genders, the proportion of old females is higher than males. Although the main structure is similar between Texas and Liberty County, the age between 20-30 year-old is a slightly smaller than the average level.

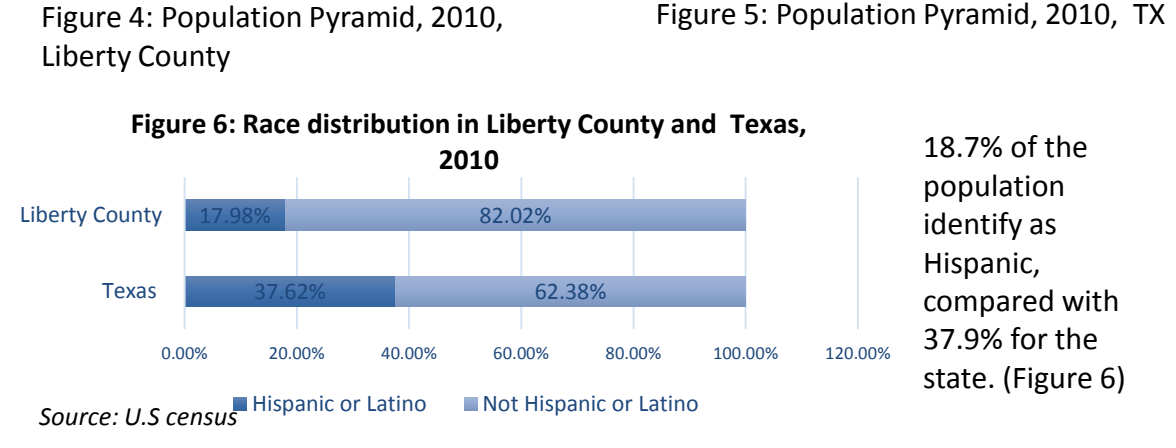
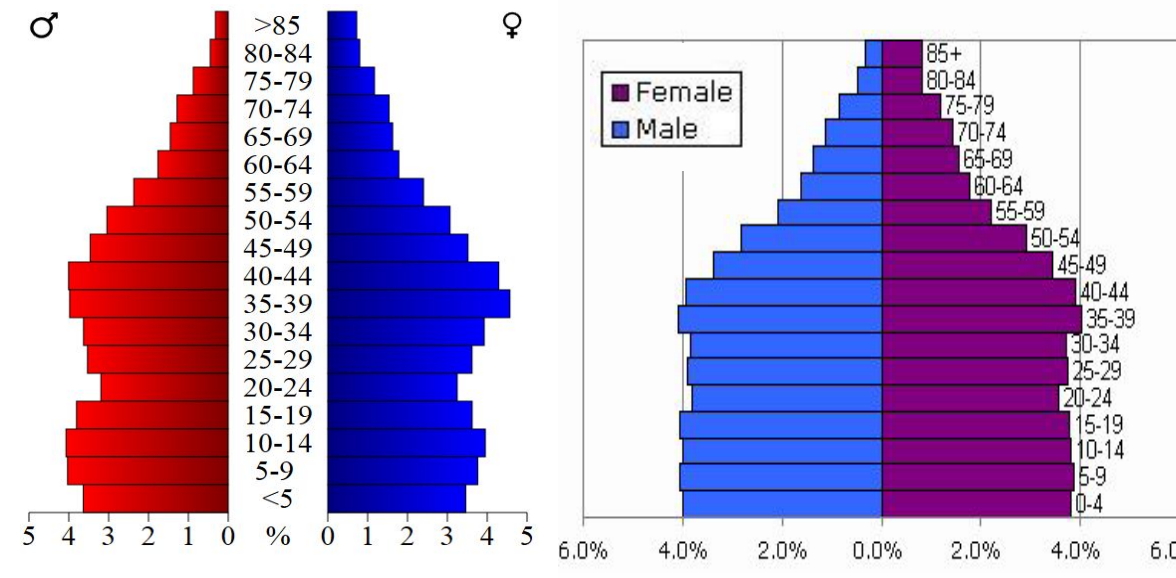


Based on the figure 7, it is obvious that the unemployment of Liberty County is far behind that of Texas, especially in the young labor market.



According to the population historical and projected (the figure below), the residents of the county raises increasingly and stably. It keeps to raise by 2,000 to 5,000 for each decade.

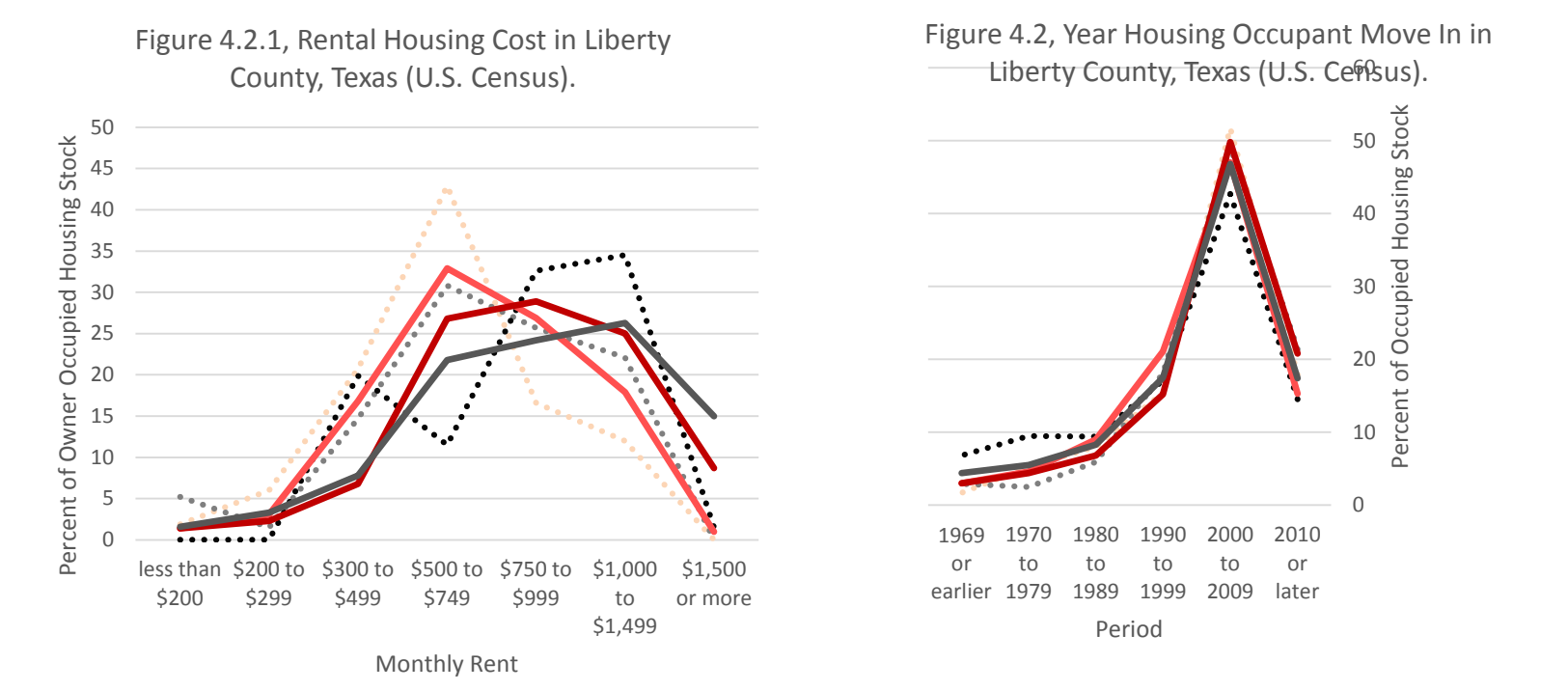
In terms of the growth rate of population, Liberty County falls far behind the average of the whole county and the neighborhood area. The growth rate of the state (20.59%) is about three times as that of Liberty County (7.82%).



Housing

Liberty County has developed slowly, over the course of many generations. The housing stock has grown at a similar rate to population, with expedited growth following World War II. Housing growth peaked in the 1990's and since has slowed significantly. Overall residential growth trends are in line with patterns for the state of Texas, with slight variations in the 1990's. In the 1990's, there was a large increase in both the number of housing units being built and the number of occupants moving into housing units, as can be seen in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. The number of occupants moving into housing units peaked in the period from 2000 to 2009.

The majority of the housing stock in the County is owner occupied, at around 80%. The value for owner occupied housing units is lower than the state average, with the median value at about \$85,000, as can be seen in Figure 4.1.1. Owner occupied housing has a very low vacancy rate of 1 percent and is affordable, with only about a quarter of owner occupied households being housing cost burdened. Renter occupied housing units costs are also below both state and national rates, with a median monthly rent of \$731, as can be seen in Figure 4.2.1. Rental housing is less affordable than owner occupied, but still more affordable than state and national comparisons.



Economy

Figure 1: Top 5 industries of Liberty County

NAICS	share	NAICS	LQ (2013)	LQ (2005)
Retail trade	20.46%	Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	10.47	7.96
Health care and social assistance	14.34%	Construction	1.66	1.19
Accommodation and food services	10.11%	Other services (except public administration)	1.63	1.36
Manufacturing	9.11%	Retail	1.61	1.72
Transportation and warehousing	6.91%	Manufacturing	1.56	1.01

Figure 2: Top 5 industries of Texas

NAICS	share
Health care and social assistance	13.21%
Retail trade	13.02%
Accommodation and food services	9.83%
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	9.64%
Professional, scientific, and technical services	9.47%

The location quotients show that Liberty County has advantage in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. Extremely concentration on Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting is an economical problem and risk for Liberty County.

Figure 3: Job densities of Liberty County

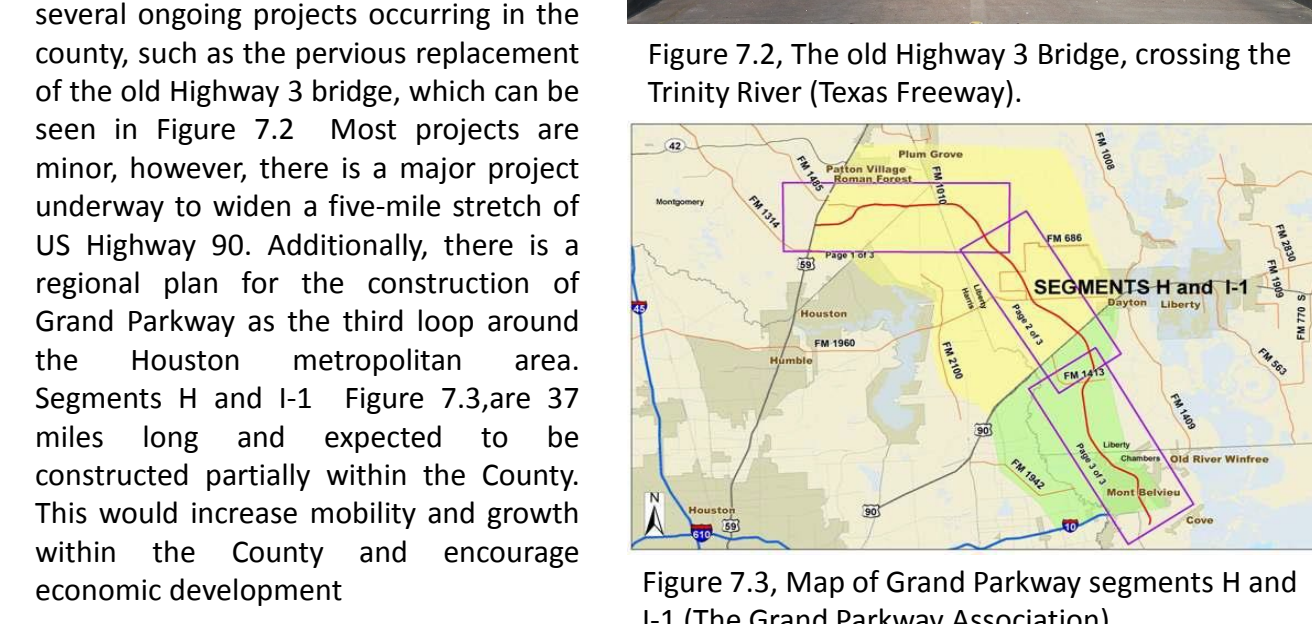
Based on the map of employment densities for Liberty County in 2005 in figure 3, the employment within Liberty County concentrates on the three major cities – Liberty City, Cleveland City, and Dayton city, similar to population distribution. The projection of job density in Liberty County for 2035 shows the same pattern.

Figure 4: Job densities of H-GAC council area

Transportation



Liberty County is located to the Northeast of Houston proper and has two major roadways that serve the Houston metropolitan area, as can be seen in Figure 7.1. US Highway 90 serves as a major route eastern from downtown Houston towards Beaumont and Louisiana. Interstate Highway 69 radiates northeast from downtown Houston and continues north as US Highway 59 through many east Texas communities before crossing state boundaries near Texarkana.



Environment

Over the period of time hurricanes, floods, severe storms, wildfires, and freezing have identified the major disturbances for this County (Table 7.1). They have caused the most damages for the County. To analyze the hazard vulnerability part of this report all of the facts has been taken from Houston-Galveston area council Hazard Mitigation Plan (H-GAC HMP) 2011 update, September 4, 2012 and Liberty County Hurricane Ike impact report.

Floods
Liberty County has experienced two types of floods such as riverine and coastal flood due to its geographic settings. Riverine flooding poses a serious threat to Liberty County and heavy rainfall events has caused flash flooding. Any future development should consider the flood zone map of this County (Fig 7.1).

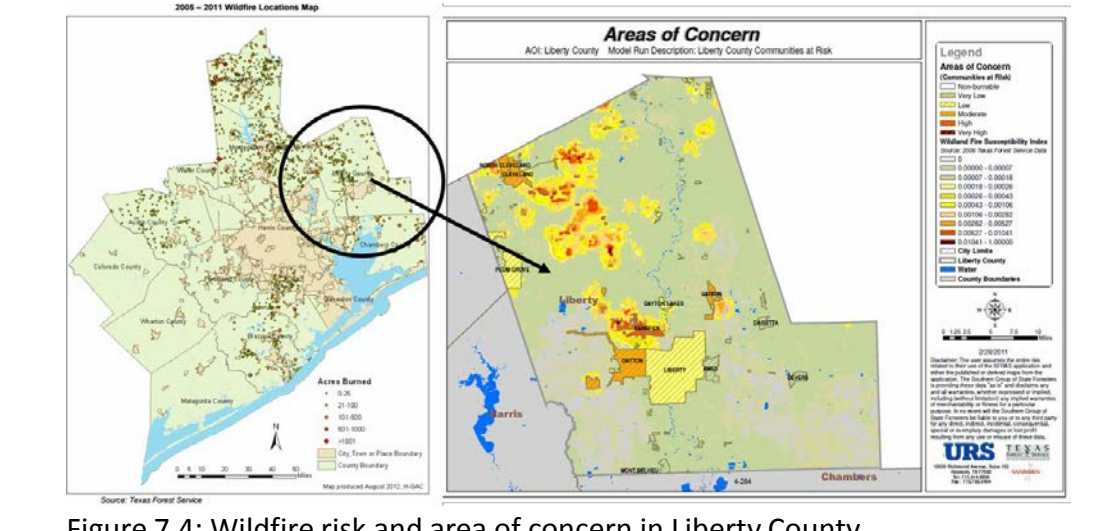
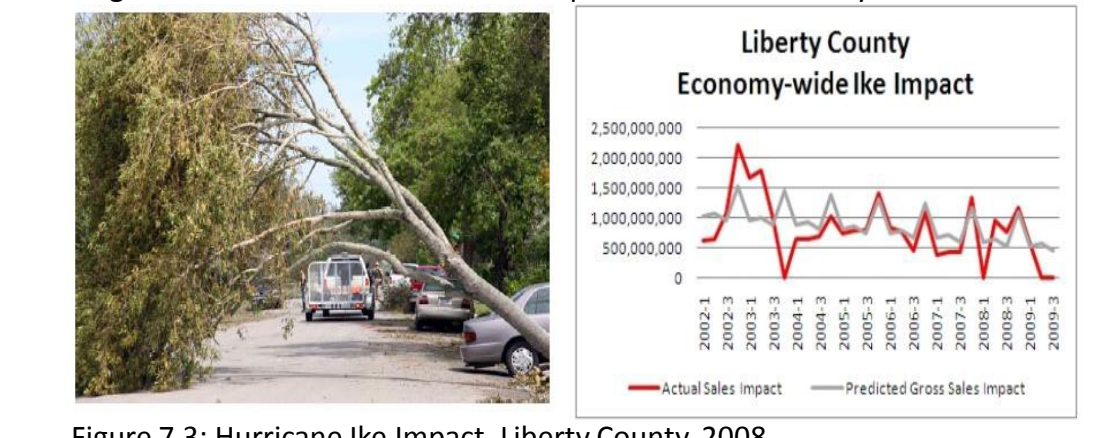
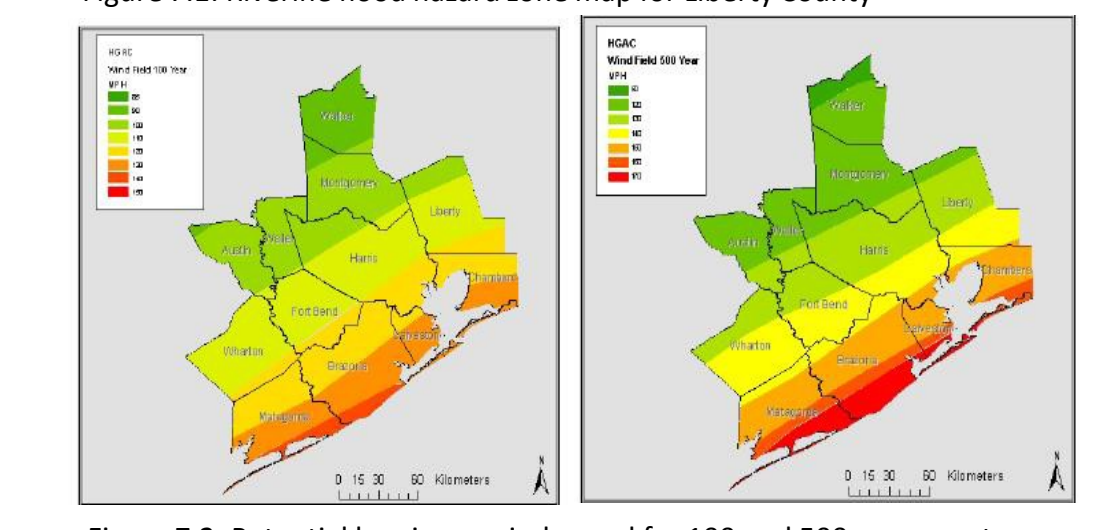
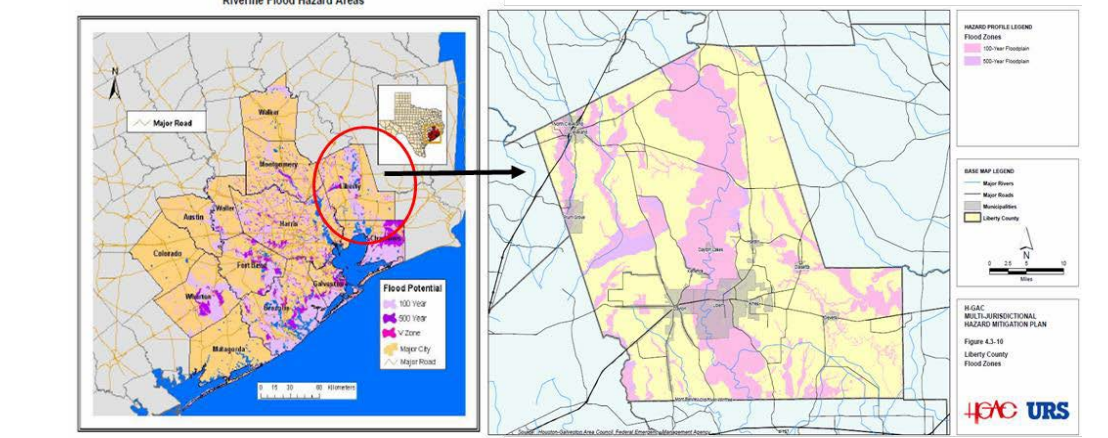
Hurricanes
From 1983 to 2008 this area has attacked by four major hurricane hits and experienced a lot of damages. However, local and city authority of this County should consider and analyze the previous hurricane events before taking any future development decision. Figure 7.2 shows the potential hurricane winds that could affect the study area assuming 100- and 500- year wind events. Figure 7.3 shows the Hurricane Ike Impact of Liberty County.

Wildfire Risk
The Texas Forest Service has conducted wildfire risk assessment for the seven Counties including Liberty County (Fig 7.4). It identified 'Areas of Concern' based on the Wildfire Susceptibility Index (WFSI)

Summary of the Potential Hazard
It is evident from the findings of this Risk Assessment by Houston-Galveston area council Hazard Mitigation Plan 2011 that the hazards posing the greatest threat to the Liberty County are Floods, hurricanes and tropical storms, tornadoes, and excessive heat and freezing. Those are the threats that should be taken into consideration for future development decision.

Table 7.1: Major disasters in Liberty County

County	Year	Event Number	DEM Incident Type	Presidential Declaration	SID Declaration
Liberty	2008	1791 DR	Hurricane	Yes	Yes
Liberty	2007	1709 DR	Severe Storms, Tornadoes, and Flooding	Yes	Yes
Liberty	2006	1624 DR	Extreme Wildfire Threat	Yes	No
Liberty	2005	1606 DR	Hurricane	Yes	Yes
Liberty	2002	1439 DR	Severe Storms, Tornadoes	Yes	Yes
Liberty	2001	1379 DR	Tropical Storm	Yes	Yes
Liberty	2000	3259	Flood	No	Yes
Liberty	1998	1257 DR	Flood	Yes	Yes
Liberty	1994	1041 DR	Flood	Yes	Yes
Liberty	1992	937 DR	Flood	Yes	Yes
Liberty	1991	900 DR	Flood	Yes	Yes
Liberty	1990	863 DR	Flood	Yes	Yes
Liberty	1989	828 DR	Flood	Yes	Yes
Liberty	1989	836 DR	Hurricane	Yes	Yes
Liberty	1983	2091	Flood	No	Yes
Liberty	1983	2115	Freeze	No	Yes
Liberty	1983	689 DR	Hurricane	Yes	Yes



Local Capacity

Table Key

Jurisdiction	HMP	DRP	CLUP	FMP	SMP	COOP	REP	SARA	TRANS	CIP	REG-PL	HPP	ZO	SO	FPO	NFP	CRS	BC
Liberty County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Ames	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Cleveland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Daisetta	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Dayton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Dayton Lakes ²	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Devers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Hardin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Kenefick ²	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Liberty	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of North Cleburne ²	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City of Plum Grove ²	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

SWOT

- (S)trengths**
- US Highway 90 is a major connection between Houston and Beaumont
 - Trinity River
 - Quality farmland
 - High quality school education
 - Hazard mitigation upgrade program
- (W)eaknesses**
- Many people are employed outside of the County
 - No comprehensive land use plan
 - No disaster recovery plan
 - No zoning ordinances
 - No historic preservation plan
- (O)pportunities**
- Increase job opportunities within the county
 - Lots of open space for development
 - High growth rate
 - Grand Parkway Segments
 - Changing population dynamics
- (T)hreats**
- Economy is very limited to agriculture and oil/gas
 - Increasing unemployment rate
 - Changing population dynamics
 - High risk of flooding and hurricane related hazards

Recommendations

Based upon the current state of the community and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified in this report, a list of recommendations were developed in order to encourage resiliency for the County of Liberty. Our recommendations are as follows:

- Develop a countywide strategic plan to guide cohesive development
- Encourage municipalities within the County to adopt zoning ordinances and comprehensive plans
- Take precautions to prepare for hazards, both before and after the event
- Develop a countywide Disaster Recovery Plan
- Encourage diversity in economy
- Evaluate future housing needs to meet changing county demographics
- Establish environmental conservation program to protect the Trinity River and areas of wetlands and forestry



References

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