

Coastal Health and Resources Model (CHARM)

Regional Coastal Resilience Seminar

Client: Texas Coastal Watershed Program, AgriLife Extension to Texas A&M, Galveston
General Location: SE Houston-Galveston, TX

Prof. John Jacob and Steve Mikulencak of Texas A&M University's Texas AgriLife Extension and the TCWP initiated the project, with cooperation from the Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC) and other organizations. They wanted to create a reusable workshop for public outreach and education aimed at, in their words, "enabling coastal communities in Texas to improve quality of life in cities and towns while preserving and enhancing the natural coastal environment." The workshop, dubbed Coastal CHARM (Community Health and Resource Management), was designed to engage local stakeholders (municipal planners, resource managers, community leaders) more deeply in the regional planning process for the Houston-Galveston area. The workshop had two purposes. First was to teach participants about pertinent topics like jobs and housing, climate change, hurricane risk, and water quality. Second was to gain insights, opinions and local knowledge from them, who as local residents had unmatched knowledge of life in their community.

The centerpiece of the workshop was a hands-on tabletop sketching exercise using CommunityViz software. The interface was projected on a low-cost "light table" set up. Participants broke into small groups and gathered around tables displaying a live map of the region. Using marker-like infrared pens as cursors, they pointed, clicked, and drew on the map to sketch alternative growth scenarios. As they sketched, charts and graphs tracked the likely implications of their plans using dozens of indicators covering a comprehensive range of topics including housing, economics, environment, hurricane risk, and water quality.

