



Joe Raedle/Getty Images

JUSTICE

FOR WHOM?

Insights from Texas coastal populations, people, and politics

Ashley Ross, Texas A&M University at Galveston

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

A social movement toward a social goal



SOCIAL GOAL

Fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

- *US Environmental Protection Agency*

SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Address the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and harms and asks whether procedures and impacts of environmental decision making are fair to the people they affect.

- *Bryant & Callewaert (2003)*

INEQUITIES ACROSS RACE & CLASS



FLOODING

Hurricane Harvey (Houston): Black and Hispanic residents disproportionately experienced flooding in areas beyond FEMA's 100-year flood zones (Smiley 2020).

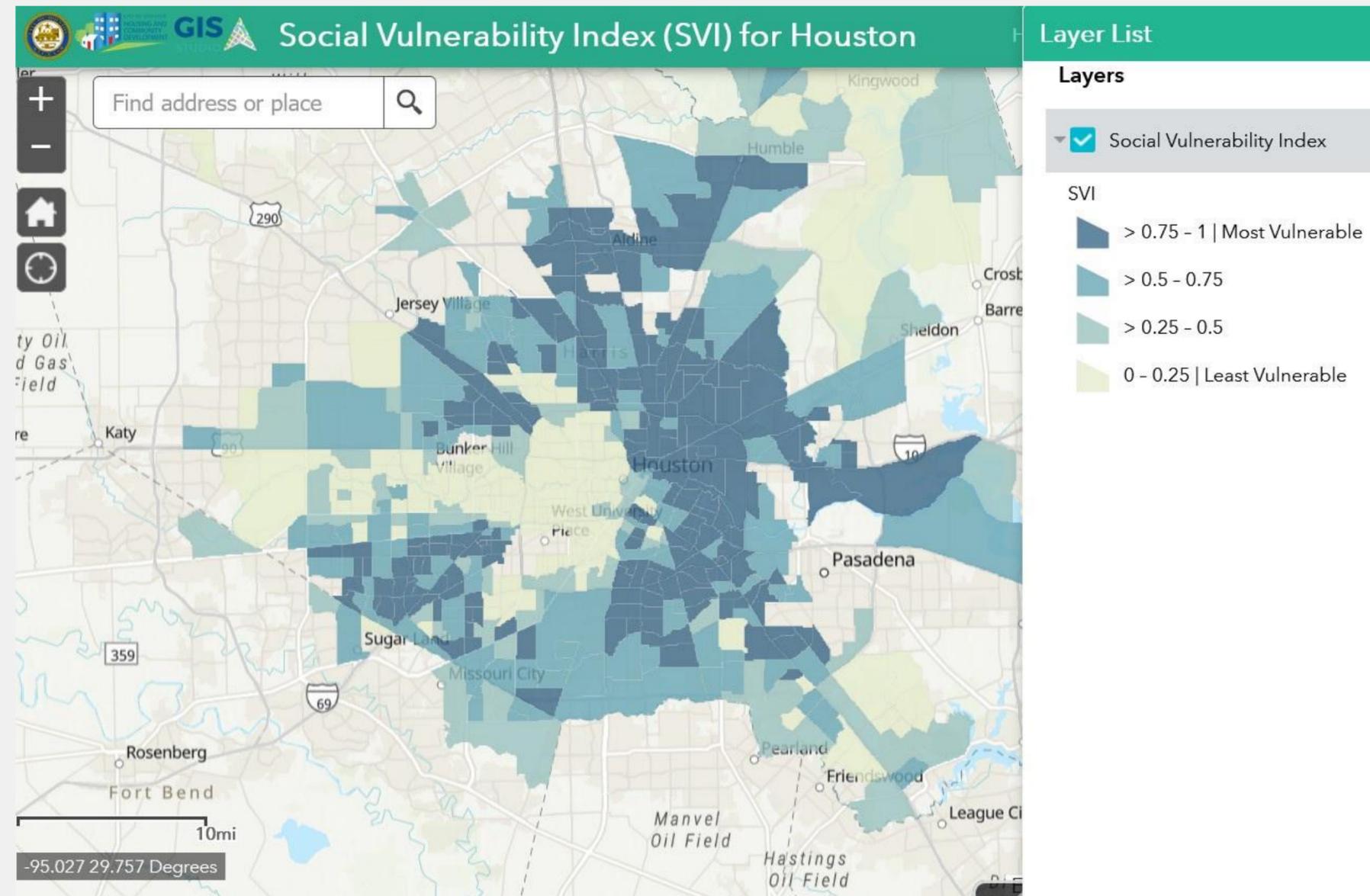
PROTECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

Houston: Minority communities more likely to have open ditch systems, which limit discharge of stormwater (Hedricks 2011).

DISASTER DAMAGES

Hurricane Ike (Galveston): Poor and minority neighborhoods experienced greater damage (Highfield et al 2014).

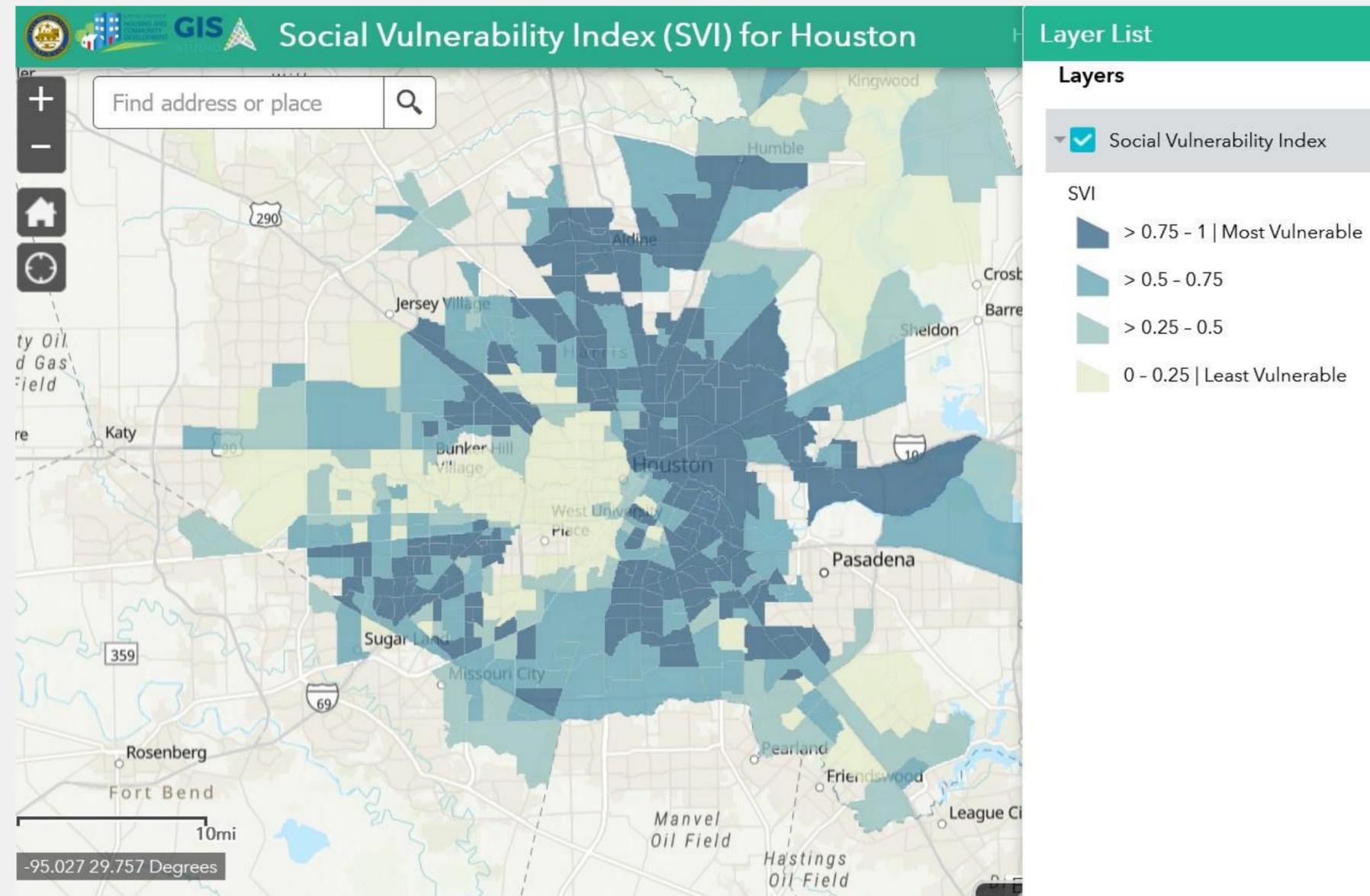
POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS



SOCIAL VULNERABILITY MEASURES

- Socioeconomic status
- Household composition in terms of age, dependents, disabilities
- Minority status & language
- Housing type & transportation

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Demographics are only proxies for capacities to deal with crisis.

**POLITICS IS AT
PLAY WHERE
INEQUITIES
EXIST.**



**Flooding in Colonia Ramirez | Hidalgo County, TX
July 2021**

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Brett Coomer/Houston Chronicle

**Arbor Gate Apartments | Houston, TX
April 2016**

**WE MUST CHANGE
WHO GETS WHAT,
WHEN, HOW.**

Local 23 Valley Central



IMPROVE EQUITY IN DECISION-MAKING

Deliberative processes may better incorporate feedback from marginalized groups but also require that the more powerful incorporate pluralistic local needs and values in management schemas.
- *Biggs et al. 2015*

ENGAGE IN CAPACITY BUILDING



USACE Transatlantic Division

SOCIAL

Recognize and address needs of vulnerable people; evaluate consequences of changes in terms of distribution of benefits.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Improve technical skills of people in local institutions; facilitate unified management schemes that connect local initiatives.

INSTITUTIONAL

Enhance equity and justice focus within internal organization; engage in inter-agency conversations about systemic barriers to risk inequities.



Environmental justice means that no community should be saddled with more environmental burdens and less environmental benefits than any other.

- Majora Carter, urban revitalization strategist

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