

“The International Case for Houston”

Remarks by
Sylvester Turner, Mayor of Houston
at the Country Promotion Strategies Conference
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Thank you for that introduction.

Let me first say to your Excellency the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, former Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, former Senator Tom Daschle, former Congressman Mike Rogers, ambassadors and other guests from the diplomatic corps, to our hosts *The Washington Diplomat*, ladies and gentlemen in attendance today, greetings from Houston. It's an honor to be here with you at the Country Promotion Strategies Conference.

I'm grateful to *The Washington Diplomat* for the invitation to address you today. In years past, speakers have come to this conference to help unlock the secrets of navigating politics and business inside the Beltway. I'm here today to tell you about another important city: Houston. You're in luck because this is my favorite topic. So, before you heard about the national capital, but today you will hear about the world's energy capital, the home of medical research and space exploration, an air and sea connection to the world, and the nation's most diverse metropolitan area.

Since I assumed office last year, many of you, as well as your government officials and millions of travelers from around the world, have visited Houston. As Houston has extended a warm welcome to all of these visitors, my goal has been the same: to strengthen Houston's international relationships and expand the city's international trade, particularly in energy, medicine, space, and logistics.

Why are so many people making their way to Houston? Because Houston is the place where you can experience the future today. Houston is the energy capital of the world, leading the effort to address the world's growing energy demands. Houston is the city where researchers will cure cancer. It is the city that has taken us to the moon and one day will take us to Mars. Houston is the city where the skies and seas are not limits but avenues to explore.

Houston also looks like the future. What I mean by that is our city's diversity today is a microcosm of the demographic trend that will be visible across this country by 2030. With one in four residents being foreign born, no ethnic majority, more than 140 languages spoken, and a multitude of religions practiced, Houston's population reflects what demographers anticipate will occur in other urban areas from coast to coast by the mid-century.

Building international relationships and expanding international trade are part of what I do every day. As the Mayor of this country's fourth-largest city and the world's 23rd largest economy, I must think globally. Houston's people and culture, as well as its economy and

ingenuity, are connected to the world. More than 430 Houston companies have offices abroad, and 730 Houston firms claim foreign ownership. We live in an interconnected world, one in which cities and their citizens are a part of a global network. The non-stop exchange of goods and ideas that drives commerce and innovation knows no borders.

Houstonians of all backgrounds have worked hard to make our city what it is today. It's a place of opportunity, a place where a person like me can grow up to become Mayor and strive to create those opportunities for others.

[BIOGRAPHY]

I was born and raised in Houston. My father worked for an oil rig manufacturer for 31 years and died when I was 13.

My mom became the CEO of the Turner household. With no high school education, working as a maid at the Rice Hotel, never learning how to drive, she raised nine children. She believed deeply in the power of education and saw to it that we were educated. Because of her, I finished secondary school in Houston as the valedictorian, and finished my undergraduate degree at the University of Houston before venturing beyond Houston to attend Harvard Law School.

[CITY HISTORY]

I tell you my story because, it is emblematic of Houston. In Houston, hard work leads to opportunity.

That opportunity has attracted millions of people to Houston since its founding a little more than 180 years ago, The Allen brothers, who purchased the land on which Houston was founded, had a vision. Through hard work and collaboration, their work launched Houston's development into a major rail hub and commercial port.

The city has come a long way since 1836 when the Allen brothers arrived. By the turn of the twentieth century, the world's most productive oil well of its time operated near our port. Discovery and hard work are integrated into every part of our city's history. The Texas Medical Center's beginnings go back to the 1940s with a grant to start a cancer research hospital. And Johnson Space Center was established in 1961 as the Manned Spacecraft Center for NASA.

[ENERGY]

While medicine, space technology, and logistics via air and sea remain pillars of our economy, today, energy is what many people consider first when they think of Houston. One in four of the world's publicly traded oil and gas exploration firms is housed in Houston, alongside a growing number of renewable energy developments. With representation across the value chain, Houston is home to 750 exploration and production firms and 800 oil field service companies.

The City of Houston also has a loud and proud history of commitment to renewable energy. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, our city is the nation's largest

municipal purchaser of green power. We lead the country in wind power purchases and serve as the base to dozens of wind companies, such as Reliant Energy Wind and Shell WindEnergy. Last month, I agreed to purchase an additional 20 megawatts– for a total of 50 megawatts of solar power to supply 10 percent of the city’s electricity needs. Houston also launched the nation’s first-ever municipal electric car-sharing program.

Houston’s preeminence in the energy industry is not static, but an ever growing, ever developing project. In an effort to further strengthen our city’s relationships and the exchange of best practices of energy economies, I have pressed for increased city membership and engagement in the World Energy Cities Partnership.

More than twenty years ago, together with Stavanger, Aberdeen, Perth, and Calgary, Houston founded the World Energy Cities Partnership – or W-E-C-P – to connect the leading energy cities across the globe. As the Secretary General of the World Energy Cities Partnership, I invite the energy cities you represent to apply for membership to this impressive international organization. Last fall, I joined leaders at the meeting in Cape Town for the annual meeting.

The WECP meeting in the spring occurs in Houston against the backdrop of the Offshore Technology Conference. Held in Houston the first week of May, the annual Offshore Technology Conference features delegates from more than 100 countries, hosts more than 2,000 exhibitors, and is attended by tens of thousands of energy professionals. While the World Energy City Partnership meeting is the go-to for policymakers and leaders of energy cities, the Offshore Technology Conference is the one “must-attend” technical conference for engineers and scientists working in offshore energy and environmental protection.

Earlier this month, Houston hosted another major energy event, the annual CERAWeek by IHS Markit. During the conference, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau joined us in Houston, was recognized with an award for his work to strengthen the economy and address energy needs while protecting the environment. And Prime Minister Trudeau was not the only major public official drawn to our city by CERAWeek. More than a dozen ministers and top officials from foreign countries, speakers from more than 50 countries, and 3,200 delegates attend each year.

These annual meetings underscore the city’s leadership in the energy sector. Drawing on this ongoing attraction of industry and policy leaders, Houston recently won the bid to host the World Petroleum Congress in 2020. Diplomats and our bid committee of private sector and local government leaders worked together to urge national committees to vote in favor of Houston.

After months of outreach, I led the delegation to Manama in December to make the final presentation for Houston to host the WPC. Our presentation was a success. Known as the Olympics of the oil and gas sector, we are looking forward to hosting this triennial conference, which will bring 10,000 people to our city from more than 60 countries.

The World Energy Cities Partnership, the Offshore Technology Conference, CERAWeek by HIS Markit, and the World Petroleum Congress are opportunities Houston offers for

government officials and private sector companies to engage directly with policymakers and global industry leaders in the energy sector.

However, while energy remains an important part of our city and what brought our city worldwide acclaim, it is now just one of many ways in which Houstonians engage with the world. Last year, I visited six international cities. In each location, with leaders at every level of government, I discussed how Houston has diversified its economy and the opportunities that exist in the city for international collaboration. Our economy has expanded and diversified to attract investments and sustain development across multiple sectors. Houston is not only a leader in energy- it is a global leader in medicine, space technology, logistics and so much more.

[MEDICAL]

Houston is home to the Texas Medical Center, a world leader in health and life sciences. The Texas Medical Center is the largest medical facility in the world. If it were its own standalone economy, it would be the 8th largest business district in this country.

Home to MD Anderson Cancer Center and other renowned surgery and research facilities, the Texas Medical Center includes 54 institutions. These institutions conduct more than 13,000 heart surgeries each year and provide research, training, and health services for more than 10 million patient visits. Patients come from every walk of life, from world leaders to medical tourists coming for specialized treatment to humanitarian cases and research studies of rare diseases found in remote corners of the world. It's estimated that an average of 20,000 international visitors travel to Houston for medical care every year.

The Texas Medical Center not only serves to save lives and improve the quality of healthcare, but also serves an important economic function, employing more than 106,000 people, including many foreign professionals who are working on H1B work visas or J1 exchange program visas. The Texas Medical Center's research and innovative practices to cure chronic diseases like cancer and diabetes and fight the spread of viruses like H1N1 and Zika make Houston a top destination for medical professionals to study, conduct research, and practice their expertise. One way to invest in the future of medicine is by investing in your people and supporting these collaborations in Houston. Another is through investments in infrastructure.

There is clear need for infrastructure development to house research expansions and demands for new health solutions to keep pace with the world's population growth. This infrastructure development is visible in investors' names on skyscrapers on the medical center's campus. There are currently \$3 billion (with a "B") in infrastructure projects underway in the Texas Medical Center. And the Medical Center's international engagement goes beyond the hospitals.

In addition to attracting international medical professionals and infrastructure investors, Houston is a source for international medical collaborations. Houston is home to Medical World Americas, which brings together 2,000 international delegates from the public, private, and academic sectors. As an international city dedicated to medical collaboration across borders, we

encourage this outreach. Representatives from the Texas Medical Center regularly travel with me when I go abroad.

For example, when we were in Mexico City, the head of the Texas Medical Center led a high-level symposium with the major hospitals in Mexico City to build relationships and share ideas in medicine across the border. Medical collaborations like these between Houstonians and entities abroad are opportunities for the best minds to come together to make the world a healthier place.

[SPACE/TECHNOLOGY]

Aerospace and space technology are presenting opportunities for diplomacy in ways that we never considered. When I think of the future of our interconnected world and innovation, I think of the International Space Station, which maintains mission control at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston.

Due to cooperation between mission control and the 17 other facilities and space agencies around the world, astronauts, biologists, chemists, and aerospace engineers in Houston are collaborating with their counterparts in Moscow, Paris, Cologne, and Tokyo daily. NASA operates with a nearly 10,000-person workforce that creates a multitude of jobs in the Greater Houston area.

From aerospace engineers at Boeing and United Space Alliance to the space medicine program at Baylor College of Medicine in the Texas Medical Center, Houston is a source of innovation and international space research. Because of this concentration of talent and innovation, the Space Commerce Conference and Exposition, or SpaceCom as we call it, takes place annually in Houston to showcase world developments in space technology and commercialized innovations.

Opportunities to develop commercial technology are now accessible through the opening of the Houston Spaceport. Following an agreement between NASA and the Houston Airport System, the Spaceport offers facilities to research, build, and test commercial space applications. For instance, Intuitive Machines — the first company based at the Spaceport — is developing tethered drone technology for uses as broad as monitoring security at public events to surveying damage at a refinery.

It's important to see and understand the impact of the space program, space technology, and the introduction of that technology into international commerce. I invite you and the technology companies you represent to join us in Houston for SpaceCom this December to learn about the future of space and what that research and development might bring to everyday people.

I also invite you to visit Space Center Houston, the most internationally visited site in Houston and a draw for esteemed visitors such as Princess Astrid and her delegation from Belgium, who made their way to NASA to learn about the International Space Station and astronaut training.

[LOGISTICS]

While connecting in space may be a little too far in the future, you are likely already connected to Houston by sea or air. The Allen brothers, the city's founders I mentioned earlier, had a vision when they saw our location, safely tucked away in Galveston Bay on the Texas Gulf Coast. They saw the potential for a vast and extensive network of commerce, a place where the railroads intersect and connect with port trade, a city that would grow to become the thriving capital of business it is today.

Earlier this year, I met with Ambassador Kauppi [ka – oo – PEE] at Houston City Hall. Shortly after, the ambassador visited the Port of Houston, which ranks first in import tonnage in the country. In 2016 the Port of Houston handled \$113 billion in foreign trade. The ambassador saw dozens of cranes, including the largest marine crane in North America. These cranes were made by Konecrane and shipped from a port outside of Helsinki to Houston as part of the port's \$1 billion modernization plan over five years.

If goods are not arriving by sea, then they are likely arriving by air. Houston has not one but two international airports with more than 70 non-stop international flights. Houston is the only city in the Western Hemisphere from which you can reach six continents. Whether its Havana or Hong Kong, Luanda or Lagos, Beijing or Buenos Aires, Doha or Dubai, you – and your goods -- can reach anywhere from Houston.

[PEOPLE AND CULTURAL]

I could go on giving you reasons why you should think beyond cities on the East and West coast and explore investments, partnerships, and export/import markets in Houston. But I have yet to tell you about the best part of Houston: the people.

Earlier I spoke of my own upbringing and education through my university studies in Houston. I love my city more every single day. And every single day I learn something new that makes our city great. At the top of my list has and always will be the people of Houston. With more than 2.2 million people in the city limits and more than 6.6 million people in the Greater Houston Area, Houston ranks as the fourth-largest city in the country. But those numbers alone don't tell you the whole story.

The economic diversity across several industries – energy and manufacturing, medicine, space technology, and logistics – attracts foreign direct investment and international partnerships. These industries attract a workforce from all over the world.

And with that workforce comes an interest to gain the academic training and vocational skills to obtain those lucrative jobs. At least 21,000 foreign students matriculate at the higher education institutions in the Greater Houston Area to prepare to join a global workforce. Houston Community College ranks first among U.S. community college institutions for enrolling the most international students, while Lone Star Community College offers vocational training programs

and partnerships as far as Jakarta. And institutions like my alma mater, the University of Houston, have partnered with research and degree-awarding programs in cities all over the world.

In a city where one in four persons is foreign born and 142 languages are spoken in homes, it's no wonder that the Kinder Institute for Urban Research found Houston to be the most diverse metropolitan area in the country. In Houston, refugees and immigrants are a pillar of our community and work force. We are one of the highest recipients of refugees per capita in the country.

That's why last year, I declared Houston a Welcoming City. Houston always has been, and always will be a "Welcoming City," a commitment I have reiterated publicly and have affirmed in meetings with many of you and your official delegations. Immigrants and refugees are our neighbors. They are the families at our schools, churches, temples, and mosques. They contribute to Houston's vibrant economy, working in all of Houston's diverse industries. Regardless of where you come from, what you look like, your disability, what you believe, or who you love, we stand together as Houstonians.

The diversity of our community is reflected in the culture arts of our city. Take for instance the performing artist Karina Gonzalez. Karina started dancing in her hometown of Caracas after she and her mother got lost driving one day and ended up at a ballet school. Today, Karina is the principal ballerina in the Houston Ballet, a longstanding institution in the Houston Theater district alongside the Houston Opera, the Houston Symphony, and the city's theater company the Alley Theater. The performance arts, dozens of museums, and music entertainment venues attract international tourists and artists.

Through sports diplomacy – soccer, American football, basketball, baseball, tennis and gymnastics -- our city has established ties to many others. Through sports, Yao Ming, who played for our basketball team the Houston Rockets, opened direct ties from Houston to Shanghai. Yao now serves as a goodwill ambassador for Houston.

[CLOSING]

Last year, in addition to hosting foreign official delegations and international leaders in every sector, I also led delegations from Houston to Havana, Mexico City, Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, and Manama. In each of my engagements with international communities – at home and abroad – I look forward to sharing opportunities in Houston.

Many of the countries represented in the room today have consular representation in Houston – whether career or honorary – both of which prove to be effective means of keeping your embassies plugged in to the opportunities in Houston. Members of the Houston Consular Corps have been tremendous advocates for promoting your countries interests in the southern United States. Through the networks your consulates have established in Houston, you have organized successful inbound trade missions, showcased world-class art exhibitions from your countries, and facilitated innumerable introductions leading to mutually beneficial opportunities for our respective citizens.

If you do not yet have consular representation in Houston, I encourage you to consider it as an effective means to promote your country.

In closing, I extend to you a personal invitation to visit or return to explore the economic powerhouse and cultural center that is Houston. My team stands ready to assist you in exploring all that is Houston, the city where you experience the future today. Energy and manufacturing, medicine, space technology, and logistics across air and sea might initially get you to Houston. I know you'll stay connected with us because of the people.

Thank you.