



S A T O P

SPACE ALLIANCE TECHNOLOGY OUTREACH PROGRAM

News release

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Act locally, think regionally, compete globally

Economic development becomes team sport in global market

BAY AREA HOUSTON, Texas – A strategic roadmap that highlights economic strengths and opportunities in every corner of the county, aimed at boosting local economic efforts, was recently unveiled at the Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia's 2008 Economic Summit.

This is the third Economic Summit that Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership has co-hosted, along with Baytown West Chambers County Economic Development Foundation and Economic Alliance Houston Port Region, since 2003.

"Since our first Economic Summit the goal has been to develop a team out of the distinctly different areas that make Precinct 2 the economic engine that it is for our region," said Harris County Precinct 2 Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia. "From a great base of workers in the service industry to our engineers at NASA and along the Ship Channel and at the Port, bringing everyone together to see how each and every one of us is a piece of the global economy has been part of our challenge. We have come from an initial meeting in 2003 to develop focus groups, to a second summit with defined goals. And now, we have a Strategic

Plan which can be applied to the specific goals of Economic Development groups such as BAHEP."

Angelou Economics, an internationally recognized consulting company based in Austin, was hired to help develop the plan and delivered the keynote address at the summit.

"We needed an honest and tough assessment of where our strengths lie and where we need to address specific challenges," said David Turkel, director of the Harris County Community Services Department. "The plan addresses our economic infrastructure, labor pool, quality of life, recruiting and training younger workers to replace those who are retiring, access to public transportation, air quality, and the encouragement of local jurisdictions to utilize economic development tools."

The assessment identifies several economic strengths in the county, like the Port of Houston, the extensive network of highways, low land costs and a growing and diverse population. The study also detailed specific challenges, like a shortage of workers in key industries and the promotion of regional infrastructure ahead of growth.

Along with Angelos G. Angelou, local and national speakers William (Bill) Lindemann, Ph.D., chancellor for San Jacinto College District; Nigel Gault, Ph.D., group managing director for Global Insight, Inc.; Stephen L. Klineberg, Ph.D., professor of Sociology for Rice University.

Lindemann discussed the workforce challenges prevalent in Texas. Specially, there is a shortage of students entering the workforce with a strong background in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Klineberg was able to provide a great historical perspective on sociological changes occurring in Houston as depicted through his Houston area survey, which has been conducted annually for 26 years.

Gault asserted that, while the United States economy is probably in a recession now due to sub-prime lending practices, Houston's economy remains strong. However, looking forward Gault predicts that the world economy will increasingly be driven by developing countries, like India and China, which are different from the traditional stronghold economies like the United States and Western Europe.

"The economic development field, as we now see it playing out across the nation and the globe, is no longer a game to be passively pursued," said Bob Mitchell, president of the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership. "It is a fierce competition where the winners vie for the most successful businesses, the newest technologies and the best jobs in the world."

The strategic plan reconfirmed some of the Partnership's target industries, but more importantly it identified areas where the region could compete better on a global level.

"Those that are not ready for the battle will be left behind to struggle," Mitchell said. "The key will be to bring the best and the brightest to Harris County through regional thinking and collaboration, and through the use of a well developed strategic plan."

A copy of the plan can be obtained on the Community Services Department Web site at www.csd.hctx.net.

Bay Area Houston is an economically and internationally diversified, high-tech region that is home to NASA Johnson Space Center and numerous industries including aerospace and specialty chemical, and a rapidly growing health care industry.

Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership is a nonprofit organization that promotes the growth of the Bay Area Houston region through the retention, expansion and recruitment of target industries. Visit www.bayareahouston.com.

Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program is funded by the State of Texas and NASA. The program provides technical assistance to small businesses to solve technical challenges they are unable to solve themselves. Visit www.spacetechsolutions.com

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