

Friendswood awards incentives for HomeTown project

Based on its Community Economic Development Committee's recommendation, Friendswood City Council unanimously approved an economic incentive grant for the development of Home Town Center by Tony Buzbee, owner of Buzbee Properties Inc.

The grant, the second of its kind to be awarded by the city, reimburses the business up to \$100,000 for city fees relating to the project construction and development.

A 60,789-square-foot, mixed-use development, Home Town Center will be located at 502 South Friendswood Drive, across from the historic Friendswood Friends



The planned HomeTown Center, depicted in the above artist's rendition, received a boost after Friendswood City Council approved an incentive that will reimburse city fees to the developer.

Church. The three-story building will feature office space and retail on the first and second floors, as well

as high-end lofts on the third floor. Some of the future tenants include Buzbee Properties, Home-

Town Bank, a coffee shop, and a title company.

"HomeTown Center will be a flagship develop-

ment for downtown that will help spur and revitalize other properties in the downtown area," said Karen Capps, Friendswood's economic development coordinator. "HomeTown Center will be the city's largest commercial mixed-use building and will provide extensive (improvements) such as ornamental lighting, wider, paved sidewalks and benches for pedestrians."

When complete, the \$9 million project will be located on 2.8 acres of land and will provide a positive economic impact on the city, including increasing property tax revenues to the city and Friendswood Independent Schools Dis-

trict by more than \$1.5 million over a 10-year period. In addition, approximately 15 new jobs will be created from the tenants.

Groundbreaking is expected to take place in December or in the first quarter of 2008.

Friendswood offers continuous assistance to business owners to help them expand or relocate their businesses to the city through a variety of economic development incentives, such as property tax abatement, municipal grant incentives and tax increment financing. For more information on economic development opportunities in Friendswood, call 281-996-3250 or visit www.ci.friendswood.tx.us.

Bay Area Houston poised for new frontier in space

As the paradigm for space exploration shifts, the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership is poised to position Bay Area Houston on the forefront of what may be the fastest growing segment in the aerospace industry - the commercialization of space.

NASA is seeking a commercial launch provider to provide launches to Earth orbit and to the International Space Station. The Shuttle provides those launch services now, but it will be retired in 2010. The opportunity for U.S. commercial companies is wide-open.

If NASA is unable to find a commercial launch provider within the U.S., they will be forced to purchase launch services on foreign spacecraft, such as the Russian Soyuz, the European Space Agency Automated Transfer Vehicle or the Japanese H-II Transfer Vehicle.

Powered by NASA

Recently, NASA announced the Commercial Orbital Transportation System program, a \$500 million program created by NASA to stimulate entrepreneurs to develop commercial launch services to and from the ISS. The partnership between public and private space exploration will drive innovation and reduce cost.

"This is the first time that NASA has sought private sector commercial launch services to the ISS," said Butch Hosler



Ready to fly

SpaceX, with its Dragon spaceship pictured on the left, was one of two winners of the NASA Commercial Orbital Transportation Services competition.

The SpaceX portion of the award is \$278 million for three flight demonstrations of Falcon 9 carrying the Dragon spaceship, which are scheduled to occur in late 2008 and 2009.

Space X has vehicle design and integration facilities at its headquarters in El Segundo, Calif. Engine and large scale structural testing occurs in McGregor, Texas.

The third demonstration flight is planned for early 2008.

Ph.D., the NASA executive on loan to the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership. "The initiative is unprecedented, since traditionally NASA has overseen the conception and development of space vehicles. Instead, NASA will hire commercial space companies to send cargo and eventually crew to the ISS."

Hosler has worked in the U.S. space program since 1989; his primary objective while at Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership is to promote the commercialization of space and the COTS program.

Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership is a distinguished regional economic development organization representing two counties, 13 cities, and more than 250 member businesses.

In addition, Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership administers the Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program, which offers up to 40 hours of free assistance from a scientist or

engineer for small business owners faced with a technical challenge.

There are more than 40 aerospace companies in the Bay Area Houston region, enabling the NASA Johnson Space Center to fulfill its human space flight mission. JSC annually manages \$4 billion in federal aerospace contracts.

Opportunity created

"The Bay Area Houston region presents an advantageous platform to develop the commercial space industry," said Bob Mitchell, director of aerospace marketing for Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership. "Bay Area Houston affords a wealth of opportunities because of its existing aerospace infrastructure, its highly educated workforce and the multiple contracting opportunities open to employers."

The Bay Area Houston aerospace community employs 92 percent of all aerospace jobs in metropolitan Houston. In total, there more than 18,000 people working in the

aerospace sector."

NASA has estimated that commercial space services will be necessary through at least 2015 since NASA's new Crew Exploration Vehicle, the Orion, may not be completed until 2014.

"Not only is commercial space a viable industry, it offers a transition for engineers and scientist during the period of the retirement of the space shuttle and the completion of the Orion," Mitchell said.

Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership leadership is vital to the success of regional economic development - continuing to attract, retain and expand industries.

Continuing mission

"The United States leads the world in innovation and space exploration," Hosler said. "This is a prime opportunity for the U.S. to develop the commercial space industry. This will enable us to continue our job, one that we have done for years."

ITGlobe invests in membership

Manufacturers and companies located in the Bay Area Houston region looking for a presence in the India market need only look as far as the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership's newest member, ITGlobe Inc.

ITGlobe specializes in serving U.S. manufacturers by exporting their high-tech product and services for aerospace and defense markets in India.

Founded in 2001, ITGlobe is primarily focused on the India market and works closely with the Indian Space Research Organization and defense organizations. ITGlobe has partnered with U.S. based manufacturers of radio frequency products and structural materials for aerospace and defense electronic structures. ITGlobe manages all aspects of pre-sales, sales, after-sales support, export administration and commercial management for its U.S. partners in India. ITGlobe also has a software development unit based in India, and is currently establishing a mechanical design center for aerospace structures in Bay Area Houston.

"We are in the business of supporting U.S. manufacturers of high-tech products and services to increase their



international business by developing the India market for them," said Ravnish Luthra, vice president of ITGlobe's International Operations. "We maintain a pool of software developers and analysts to provide software and mechanical design services to Houston-based companies."

BAHEP president Jim Reinhartsen says ITGlobe is a great addition to the membership roster, which includes more than 265 businesses.

"ITGlobe brings unique services to the table and is a respected resource for those companies looking towards the India market."

"We hope to partner with many Houston based aerospace and defense manufacturers", said Luthra. "And we see Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership as platform for us to get in touch with many community related projects in our own area."

La Porte make-over earns praise

After investing more than \$2 million in its downtown district, La Porte will share the national spotlight in March when the city is honored as a Nationally Recognized Main Street Community.

After earning state kudos, La Porte will be recognized for its redevelopment efforts at the 2008 National Main Streets Conference scheduled for March in Philadelphia.

The Texas Historical Commission and the National Trust for Historic Preservation recognized La Porte as one of the 59 Texas Main Street Cities.