

**Opportunity HoustonSM Annual Meeting
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President and CEO
Greater Houston Partnership**

“Opportunity HoustonSM 2007: A Year of Accomplishment”

Back in July, in an interview with the *Houston Chronicle*, Dayton McLane was discussing his role as chair of *Opportunity HoustonSM*. The Astros' owner talked about the program in terms of helping the region “find its destiny” and understanding what direction we should take in the future. Appropriately, the headline that accompanied that interview read, “Dayton McLane Looks for Winners.”

If *Opportunity HoustonSM*'s 2007 accomplishments are any indication, he's found one – and so have we all. And while it would be unwise to declare total victory this early in the effort, I can safely say that we're going in the right direction...and are well on our way to finding – and achieving – our destiny.

When we first announced our 10-year Strategic Plan for economic development, the primary goals, while ambitious, were simple:

- To help grow jobs by 600,000;
- To increase capital investment by \$60 billion; and
- To expand foreign trade by \$120 billion by the end of 2015.

2007 has been a banner year, and we're well on our way. Last year, with the numbers available at year's end, we had more than 60,000 new jobs in the region. According to the data available as of December, capital investment had grown by at least \$6 billion.

Of that, *Opportunity HoustonSM* is directly responsible for more than 14,000 jobs and over \$500 million in capital investment.

Additionally, through our support of the Port of Houston Authority and the Houston Airport System, foreign trade for the region has increased by an amazing \$15.2 billion. That's more than 125 percent of our annual goal.

But those aren't the only figures that attest to the progress *Opportunity HoustonSM* has fostered. Here's a quick look at some of our other accomplishments in 2007:

- We increased the number of qualified, open leads by 17 percent, and added 600 potential leads to the recruitment pipeline.
- We met with 67 company decision-makers and location advisors to help attract business to the region.
- We hosted three inbound recruitment events that attracted two location advisors and 21 company decision-makers.
- And we organized our first domestic outbound business recruitment mission to Atlanta, which produced three qualified leads.

It's been said that the beginning of a work stands for the whole. If that's true, and you look at our initial set of results, then the great start of *Opportunity HoustonSM* is just a sign of even greater things to come.

There are two other milestones we reached in 2007 that bear discussion. They don't have anything to do with facts and figures – but they have everything to do with how we're perceived in the economic development marketplace.

The first is the successful launch of *Opportunity Houston* magazine. A joint venture we introduced with Texas Monthly Custom Publishing, this publication's content reflects the goals of our strategic plan, is directly linked to our mission, vision and objectives.

It is a celebration of what makes this region a magnet for business, a gateway to global markets and a preferred place to live and work. Each issue provides readers with an up-close-and-personal view of a world-class city whose leaders – in business as well as in the community – are turning today's potential into tomorrow's reality.

We reached the second milestone we closed out the year. And I think it demonstrates our commitment to not only serving the Strategic Plan, but also to serving the broader interests of the region.

It's no secret that Houston has had a hit-and-miss record when it comes to developing an umbrella theme and message that reflects who and what we are. The optimist in me says that maybe the diversity of messages over the years reflects the diversity of the opportunities in the region.

On the other hand, we live in a world where it is tough to break through the communications clutter. There's traditional media, the Internet, blogs, podcasts – all of them competing for our attention. To be heard, you need a strong, consistent, targeted message.

We think we've developed one.

In 2007, the Partnership began surveying and interviewing key audiences to get an idea of the region's strengths and challenges, and to see how the Houston region is perceived. We then used the findings to determine how to define and translate the *Opportunity HoustonSM* brand, and create a new look, logo and tagline that capture our unique marketing proposition.

The result is *Opportunity Houston: All the World - One Region*, a message I believe truly captures our unique marketing proposition. It effectively positions us as the new global gateway – a place that is connected, innovative and welcoming. Beyond that, it has an advantage that a lot of taglines don't – it happens to be true.

And as you'll hear from Tracye in a moment, we have a plan in place to communicate our message throughout the region, across the nation and around the world. And by effectively executing that plan, the business community – and the community at large – will benefit significantly.

The strength of an initiative like *Opportunity HoustonSM* is in no small part due to the commitment of those who are willing to invest in its success. In 2007, we saw just how broad and deep the support for this program is:

As Phase 1 ended, campaign commitments topped \$31.9 million – more than 75 percent of our total campaign goal – from 154 investors. Our achievements over the past 12 or so months show clearly that we're already beginning to see a significant return on that investment, too.

But 2007 is history, and 2008 is here, and none of us have any intention of resting on past achievements. And for all the ambitious goals of *Opportunity HoustonSM*, I've got one that's just as ambitious:

To come back before this group at next year's annual meeting and tell you that as good as 2007 was, 2008 was even better – and that your dedication, enthusiasm and energy has continued to be the great engine of our ongoing progress.

Thank you.