

**Texas Tour Reception
April 4, 2008**

**Jeff Moseley
President and CEO
Greater Houston Partnership**

Welcoming Remarks

On behalf of the Partnership and our economic development allies and investors, I would like to welcome you to greater Houston – a region where tomorrow is today. I say that because if you're looking for future growth, opportunity, and prosperity, now is the time and this is the place.

You know, in our business we spend a lot of time talking about the importance of locating in a particular area – and trust me, I'll get to the benefits of greater Houston in a moment, and they are significant. But an equally important part of the process is the role that site selection professionals in ensuring the right fit between prospect and location.

They "size up" communities, perform due diligence, and assess factors – everything from market potential to ramp-up times – that are specifically relevant to companies. They work as intermediaries among local representatives, economic developers, and prospects. They are the critical connection between generating the lead and creating the opportunity. They help turn long lists into short lists, short lists into finalists, and finalists into winners.

And they inform the process at every stage with their insight, instincts, judgment, and experience.

This evening, we are privileged to have with us four of the best in the business:

- Robert Rischman, Managing Director at True Partners Consulting, a tax and business advisory firm with 150 professionals in seven locations;
- Howard Silverman, of CAI Global – Canada, which specializes in bridging the interests of business and government in corporate investment projects;

- Bob Ady, of Ady International, who has identified more prime locations for businesses in the United States than anyone; and
- Michael Mullis, Owner and President of J.M. Mullis Inc., who has personally completed more than 1,200 projects.

Please join me in acknowledging not only their skills, professionalism and expertise, but also the role that they, and site selectors across the country, play in making life better for the companies and communities they serve.

Of course, I'd like to think that having a good product has a pretty substantial role to play in the selection process, too. And by just about any standard, we have a great one here.

- Between January 2007 and January 2008, the Houston MSA gained more job jobs – and added jobs at a faster rate – than any other major U.S. metropolitan area, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. During that period, we accounted for more than 10 percent of the nation's net job growth.
- Our job growth rate during that period was 3.9 percent – more than five times higher than the national figure of 0.7 percent.
- The Texas Workforce Commission says we added 103,400 new jobs in calendar 2007.
- *Fortune* magazine has rated us the nation's No. 1 region for fastest-growing companies.
- *Forbes* says we're the third-best metropolitan area for business and careers.
- We have 23 *Fortune* 500 companies with headquarters here – the fourth-highest in the country – and 13 of *Fortune's* 100 fastest-growing companies are headquartered in the region.
- *Expansion Management* puts us at No. 5 for best business opportunities.
- *Site Selection* ranks us No. 7 for new and expanded facilities.

There are a lot of reasons for these rankings and achievements. Our cost of doing business is 11 percent lower than the national average and far below that

of any area with more than 3 million people, according to *Forbes*. That enables new companies to become profitable faster, and existing companies to continually build upon their financial performance.

We offer an abundance of low-cost undeveloped property, office space and industrial space. In other words, we give companies room to locate and room to grow.

Our transportation infrastructure is built for speed, allowing businesses to get their products to market faster and rapidly bring in raw materials and supplies.

We have a diverse, productive workforce – men and women of great skill, loyalty, and enthusiasm.

Government at every level understands the value of business and sees private enterprise as the backbone of our economic well-being.

And then there's our "can-do spirit." Our people, our leaders and our businesses all believe that anything is possible. When we want something to happen, we make it happen.

All of this shows without question that we are, truly, a region of endless opportunity. And I want to assure you that we're not standing on the successes of the past. As good as our business climate is now, we have a plan to make it better.

In 2005, we adopted a 10-year Strategic Plan for economic development. Its goals, while ambitious, are quite simple:

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

We're already hitting the targets, too. As I said a moment ago, job growth is actually exceeding our objectives. We expect to show capital investment increased by \$6 billion in 2007. Additionally, through our support of the Port of Houston and the Houston Airport System, foreign trade for the region has increased by \$15.2 billion – more than 125 percent of our annual goal.

Much of our success can be attributed to an initiative called *Opportunity HoustonSM* that we launched in 2006 to support the Strategic Plan.

This \$40 million fund-raising initiative is designed to generate high-quality leads, create high-wage jobs, and help spread the word – nationally, internationally, and to site consultants – about everything this region has to offer.

It includes a state-of-the-art GIS system to match prospects with their ideal locations throughout the 10-county region; programs targeted to key economic development decision makers; and advertising, public relations, and direct mail activities that will underscore our standing as a global magnet for jobs and investment.

I don't need to tell anyone in this room how competitive the business recruitment marketplace is. It's tough. So the key to success in this climate isn't simply having the "will to win." The key is being prepared to win. With our strategic plan, supported by *Opportunity HoustonSM*, we are. We will be one of America's Top 4 locations for business growth, capital investment and job creation.

So what does all of this mean to site-selection professionals? Actually, it's pretty simple. If your clients come to greater Houston, they win. They win today, because our economic environment is already among the very best in the nation. And they win tomorrow, because it's only going to get better.

Thanks very much. And, once again, welcome to the land of opportunity.