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NEWS RELEASE

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MAYOR PARKER TO MOVE HOUSTON FORWARD WITH FISCAL PRUDENCE, ERA OF INNOVATION

Announces Hire Houston First program to support small business growth

HOUSTON – In her inaugural *State of the City* address, Mayor Annise Parker reassured the region's business community that, while Houston does face challenges, it is fundamentally strong. The Mayor shared her vision for guiding the city into the future during an annual luncheon hosted by the Greater Houston Partnership. She also assured the crowd of more than 1,500 that raising property taxes was not among the options she would pursue as she considers solutions to Houston's \$100 million budget gap.

GHP has adopted an emphasis on community alignment, honing diverse perspectives to focus on common regional issues as it advocates on behalf of the business community. According to Jeff Moseley, president and CEO of GHP, "Today's event is a clear demonstration of the commitment of City leaders and GHP to work together to secure economic prosperity for Houston."

Mayor Parker also voiced her commitment to working with the business community and regional allies to attract and retain jobs, a fact reinforced by her recent visit to Washington, DC, to advocate for NASA's Constellation program. Additionally, the Mayor plans to partner with GHP and others in their work to stimulate international business development, accompanying officials on upcoming missions to key foreign trade partners.

The address, which came on the eve of Mayor Parker's 100th day in office, touched on the importance of coordination, shared sacrifice and out-of-the-box thinking to successfully move the city forward. "A lot has happened in the last three months," she reflected. "We hit the ground running the day after the election and haven't stopped, and we won't stop. Our focus now must be preparing for the changes yet to come."

Mayor Parker pledged to usher in an "Era of Innovation" to identify ways to streamline, modernize and reform the core functions of municipal government. In doing so, she plans to enlist the help of elected officials, community leaders, area universities and residents to implement several key initiatives.

The Mayor has formed a "budget SWAT team" tasked with scrubbing the City's budget to identify savings opportunities. Steps have already been taken to implement cost-saving measures identified through audits Mayor Parker conducted during her tenure as City Controller. Additionally, the City plans to renegotiate existing vendor contracts to maximize value for taxpayer dollars.

Among the initiatives of interest to the business leaders in attendance was the announcement of the City's *Hire Houston First* policy. It encourages the use of local companies and the hiring of local workers for city projects. *Hire Houston First* is designed to ensure the city's residents and the local economy benefit from billions of dollars in capital improvement and infrastructure projects.

(more)

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The Mayor also announced the launch of **VOLUNTEER HOUSTON**, an initiative which will use citizen support in a variety of city functions ranging from administrative work to walking dogs at the city's Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care (BARC). Area businesses and information technology students will also be convened to form a think tank to provide recommendations for improving the City's IT services. City volunteers currently save taxpayers \$100,000 per year. Mayor Parker believes **VOLUNTEER HOUSTON** will greatly expand upon those savings.

While paring of departmental budgets may be necessary to balance the City's budget, Mayor Parker reiterated her commitment to shared sacrifice in addressing shortfalls by saying, "Everything is on the table. I won't ask departments to cut their budgets without cutting my own."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Full text of Mayor Parker's address is available at www.houstontx.gov.

The Greater Houston Partnership is the primary advocate of Houston's business community and is dedicated to building regional economic prosperity. It represents 10 counties: Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, San Jacinto and Waller. With more than 2,100 Member organizations, GHP represents approximately one-fifth of the region's work force. Visit GHP at houston.org.