

MOBILITY

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GLOBAL IMMIGRATION & TAX COMPLIANCE

A COMPLICATED MARRIAGE?

BUSINESS TRAVELERS

& SHORT-TERM ASSIGNMENTS

WOMEN

& BUSINESS TRAVEL: UNIQUE NEEDS?

THE AMERICAS COME TO

HOUSTON



EXCEEDING LIMITS in HOUSTON

The Bayou City prepares to host Worldwide ERC's
first Americas Mobility Conference

By Michelle Sandlin, SCRP, GMS-T

Since Houston will be hosting Worldwide ERC's® first Americas Mobility Conference next month, this is the perfect time to introduce you to the city I have been calling home for the past 30 years. Actually, I want to do a lot more than introduce you to Houston—I want to really show off the city to you and get you fired up about coming here for the conference. So, with a little help from my friends, I'm going to expose Houston for the truly awesome and cool—that's right, cool!—city it has become, and give you a sneak preview of what you can expect to find here.

COWBOY BOOTS ... SOMETIMES

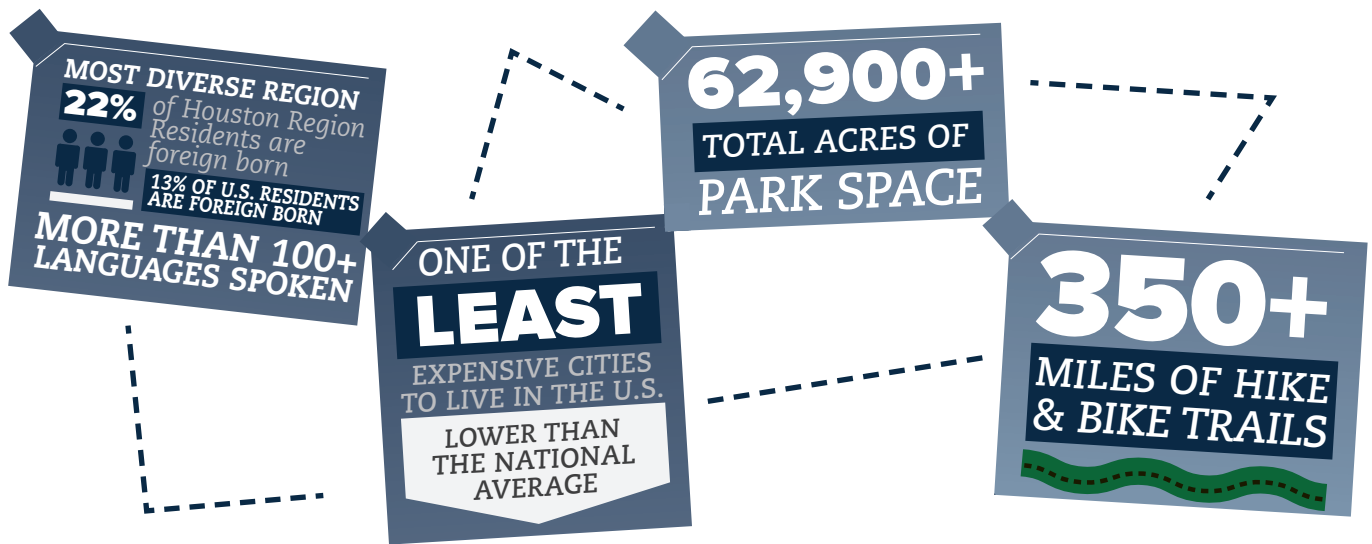
First of all, the Houston mobility community very much looks forward to welcoming you to the Bayou City! We are very excited that Worldwide ERC® has decided to convene here. It seems a natural fit, since Houston continues to be a top relocation destination. Every year we are proud of the businesses that choose to relocate their headquarters to Houston, as well as the many others that add Houston to their global footprint.

It is no wonder, given the many factors that make Houston an attractive choice, such as the ease with which businesses can set up shop here and take advantage of the business-friendly environment, high quality of life, availability of a talented workforce, low cost of living, low tax burden, lack of state income tax, and strong, diverse economy. Houston is also located for easy access to domestic and international markets.

Of course, for many of you, this will not be your first time to Houston. Nonetheless, I hope this profile will contain a thing or two about Houston that you weren't already aware of or that you might find interesting. And for those of you who have never visited the Bayou City before, I hope it dispels a few misconceptions that people typically have when they think about Houston.

Surprise! It's not the Houston you may remember from the movie *Urban Cowboy*. We don't walk around every day in cowboy hats and cowboy boots and dance the two-step while holding a longneck bottle of beer—although, during rodeo time, that's another story!

Peggy Smith, Worldwide ERC® president and CEO, fondly recalls her first trip to Houston at a time when the city was portrayed through the Hollywood lens.



Infographics courtesy of Greater Houston Partnership

"Houston has a special place in my heart and background," she says. "As a high school sophomore, when *Urban Cowboy* was trending, I went to Houston to visit my sister, and I fell in love with it! It was in Houston that I developed my passion for country music, so much so that I returned on a few occasions for the annual Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. And since we all remember our first time, I'll share this—it's where I bought my first pair of cowboy boots!"

MORE THAN THE PRICE OF OIL

The stubborn cowboy image notwithstanding, as the fourth-largest city in the U.S., Houston is one of the most cosmopolitan, international cities you will ever visit. Houston is known as the "energy capital of the world," but it is much more. The common belief among outsiders that Houston's economy is based solely on the energy sector is a huge misconception. That may have been the case during the oil boom and bust of the 1980s, but Houston has learned its lesson since then, and the city's economy is much more diversified today.

One of the best examples can be seen in the growth of the health care industry. Houston is home to the largest medical complex in the world, the Texas Medical Center, and is at the forefront of advancements in life sciences. According to Bob Pertierra, senior vice president and chief economic development officer at the Greater Houston Partnership (GHP), the health care industry is projected to continue to grow and create even more jobs this year. "As of December 2015, health care employed about 320,000 Houstonians," he notes. "Meanwhile, the energy sector employed about 285,000, which includes upstream, downstream, midstream, as well as chemical.

"Houston is so much more than the price of oil," Pertierra continues. "To me, what is unique about Houston is how international a city it is and how

truly global the nature of our economy is. Every language of business spoken in the world is spoken here by a native speaker. And we have more international destinations than the Chicago or Dallas airports, which is because of the people who are here and the business that is being conducted around the world."

Today, Houston's strong economy is buoyed by the following top industries:

- Aerospace
- Banking and finance
- Wholesale and retail trade
- Construction and real estate
- Energy
- Engineering
- Health care
- Manufacturing
- Technology

The GHP works in conjunction with the City of Houston, the mayor's office, elected officials, and Houston's 36 regional economic development groups to make Houston one of the world's best places to live, work, and build a business. The GHP does this by promoting economic development, foreign trade, and investment, and by advocating for efficient and effective government that supports rather than impedes business growth.

In June 2014, the GHP launched a successful image campaign that has resonated with homegrown Houstonians and new residents alike—"Houston: The City With No Limits." This representation of the boundless opportunities available to anyone and everyone highlights Houston as a great place to live, work, and play.

Campaign documents state, "All cities have their limits—geographic boundaries that define the area. Few cities have the ability to expand beyond those boundaries and offer their residents something much

greater than just amenities. Houston is one such city. You can call us Space City or Bayou City, but what you can't call us is a city that limits imagination. ... Of all the U.S. cities, you are most free to make your dreams a reality in Houston. There are no limits to what you can achieve if you are willing to work for it. It is this boundless spirit that we celebrate in our campaign, Houston: The City With No Limits."

HOUSTONIANS ON HOUSTON

I asked some of my fellow Houstonians and leaders within the real estate and mobility community to share a bit about what they love about Houston. Here's what they had to say:

Kirsten Abney, CRP, Senior Vice President, Heritage Texas Properties:

"Houston truly is the city with no limits in every way! Job opportunities, recreational activities, arts and entertainment, restaurants, housing ... you name it, Houston has it all! A few words that I use to describe Houston are warm and friendly, fun, vibrant, and diverse. I truly love this city and am so grateful that we have the opportunity to host our Worldwide ERC® colleagues this year."

Mario Arriaga, 2016 Chairman, Houston Association of Realtors, and Broker/Owner, First Group:

"Houston is one of the most vibrant and culturally diverse cities in America, with a low cost of living, the world-renowned Texas Medical Center, incredible cuisine, and countless arts, entertainment, sports, and recreation destinations. This is one of the fastest-growing regions in the U.S. The Houston real estate market has been one of the healthiest in the country and is known for its wide selection of communities and properties to suit every lifestyle, whether you plan to rent or buy."

Tess Chaney, CRP, Relocation Director, Martha Turner Sotheby's International Realty:

"Houston is a beautifully diverse city. It's not uncommon to hear several different languages while walking through The Galleria [shopping center]. The city's international influences can be seen in the architecture, heard in conversations, and tasted in the food. From tacos, bánh mì, tikka masala, and crepes to fried chicken, ribeye steak, and barbecue brisket, the city celebrates the cultures that make Houston unique."



INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

Houston, a major international city, consistently ranks among the top three U.S. cities in the number of foreign consulates. It is the base of operations for the international oil and gas exploration and production industry, and for many of the nation's largest international engineering and construction firms.

- A key center for international finance, Houston leads the Southwest with 21 foreign banks from nine nations. The Houston operations of these banks account for 12 of Texas' 15 foreign bank representative offices and seven of Texas' nine foreign bank agencies.
- Ninety-one nations have consular representation in the city, ranking Houston's consular corps third-largest in the nation.
- Fourteen foreign governments maintain trade and commercial offices in Houston, and the city has 32 active foreign chambers of commerce and trade associations.
- Consumers can search the Houston Association of Realtors properties database (*har.com*) in English, Spanish, Chinese, French, German, Italian, and Vietnamese. The association's more than 5,600 multilingual Realtors speak 94 languages.
- Houston has 17 sister-city relationships promoting business opportunities across five continents: Australia (1), Asia (6), Europe (7), Africa (1), and the Americas (2).
- In May 2015, the Greater Houston Partnership's database listed 5,700 Houston-area firms, foreign government offices, and nonprofit organizations involved in international business.
- Four hundred and thirty Houston-area companies report having offices abroad in 144 countries.
- More than 800 firms in Houston report foreign ownership.
- More than 150 foreign-owned firms invested in office expansions, new plants, and expanded distribution facilities in Houston since the beginning of 2011.
- At least \$12.5 billion in capital investments have been made by foreign-owned firms in Houston since January 2011.
- At least 2,800 local manufacturers engage in global commerce.
- Eleven of Houston's 32 skyscrapers (at least 150 meters tall) are owned, co-owned, or financed by foreign investors.

Source: Greater Houston Partnership Database, June 2015

Holly Holmes, CRP, 2016 President, Houston Relocation Professionals, and Account Manager, AIREs:

"While Houston is the nation's fourth-largest city and a melting pot of diversity, the warmth and kindness of the community is overwhelming, making it feel like a small town. I relocated to Houston in 2000 after serving in the Navy in San Diego and have made lifelong friends and a home here."

Pattie Huey, GMS, Director of Relocation and Business Development, Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate Gary Greene:

"Houston has an energy unlike any place I have ever been. There is a cultural vitality that permeates work environments, as well as the lifestyles of those who call Houston home. There is an optimistic vivacity that propels ideas, hopes, and dreams forward, making anything possible and anybody welcome. Calling Houston the energy capital of the world has a whole different meaning to me."

Anne Incorvia, GMS, Executive Vice President, John Daugherty, Realtors:

"Houston is an impressive city with so much to offer every person and lifestyle. You can have a fantastic quality of life here, because living in Houston is the best of all worlds. It's a huge, cosmopolitan city with all of the amenities you could ever want, yet it still has a small-town, hometown feel. The energy here is positive and uplifting, and the people are incredibly welcoming. It's really an exciting community with the best of everything."

Mary Piper, Director of Relocation and Operations, Bernstein Realty:

"As an expatriate, Houston is a welcoming city. It's my home! No one is a stranger for long. We have amazing choices for arts and entertainment. The climate allows us to utilize the green space, community parks, dog parks, walking and hiking trails, and outdoor exhibitions year-round. Houston has so many hidden gems that when people move here they quickly discover what Houstonians already know!"

Patricia Pollard, CRP, GMS, Relocation Director, Coldwell Banker United Realtors:

"Houston is absolutely one of the best places in the world to live, work, and play! There is an energy in the Houston business community that is unparalleled and a spirit of cooperation among Houstonians that makes everyone feel welcome and at home. There are so many choices when it comes to lifestyle and communities, and truly something for everyone when it comes to housing. I can't think of a better place to be, especially if you are in the relocation industry!"

SYMBOLIC OF MOBILITY

Peggy Smith believes Worldwide ERC®'s selection of Houston as the site of its first Americas Mobility Conference was a logical choice.

LARGEST HOUSTON-AREA EMPLOYERS

Number of local employees, 2015:*

Memorial Hermann Health System – 19,500

The University of Texas MD Anderson – 19,290

United Airlines – 17,000

Exxon Mobil Corporation – 13,191

Shell Oil Company – 13,000

Houston Methodist – 13,000

Kroger Company – 12,000

National Oilwell Varco – 10,000

Schlumberger Limited – 10,000

BP America, Inc. – 9,537

UTMB Health – 9,318

Baylor College of Medicine – 9,232

Chevron – 9,000

ARAMARK Corp. – 8,500

HCA – 7,855

Hewlett-Packard – 7,000

Macy's – 7,000

AT&T – 6,900

CHI St. Luke's Health – 6,800

The Dow Chemical Company, Freeport – 6,600

Jacobs – 6,220

Halliburton – 6,200

H.E.B. – 6,000

Texas Children's Hospital – 6,000

Baker Hughes – 6,000

Fiesta Mart, Inc. – 5,500

KBR – 5,089

LyondellBasell Industries – 5,080

JPMorgan Chase – 5,000

CenterPoint Energy – 5,000

Reliant, An NRG Company – 4,900

*Ranked by number of employees. The list does not include casual dining establishments, municipalities, school districts, community colleges, public universities (except UTMB Health and The University of Texas MD Anderson), and governmental agencies.

Source: Greater Houston Partnership Database, June 2015

"We're thrilled about Houston," she says. "What a great location to launch our first Americas Mobility Conference! We have a terrific membership base here—colleagues who love being in the mobility profession, who are involved and spirited contributors. It's a significant transportation hub, which facilitates our attendees' travel. And it's

an area with deep business and mobility roots, so it's symbolic of our industry as well. As for things that are new and interesting ... just stay tuned. This is a year of reimagining for us at Worldwide ERC®, and we have lots of surprises ahead!"

As always, corporate HR professionals are invited and encouraged to attend the conference. For any global mobility professional who might be on the fence about whether to attend, Smith says there is no better place to gain and share industry insights: "Worldwide ERC® events are known to be the place where the leaders, the innovators, the people who make things happen gather to learn about the latest developments in the mobility industry. The global economy is uncertain, and the oil and gas industries are facing a number of significant challenges this year, so it's more critical than ever to stay close to other mobility professionals and one's association to hear about cost efficiencies and logistical solutions. Having access to a major conference right in one's region is a great way to gain knowledge and contacts with minimal time and resource investment. And we'd really like to see our Houston professionals come out in force to learn from the meeting, contribute their expertise, and share their local lens with our attendees!"

And from all of us here in Houston, we can't wait to welcome y'all here in May! *M*

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