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**GENE LOCKE'S  
BUSINESS PLAN FOR HOUSTON**

# Business Plan for Houston

## GOALS: When Gene Locke is Mayor of Houston:

- **City Hall will remain ethical, accountable & transparent**
- **Houston will continue to lead the nation in job growth.**
- **Houston will rank in the top 5 U.S. cities in Small and Women & Minority Owned Business Profitability**
- **Houston will be positioned as the world's energy – and alternative energy – capital**
- **Education will support economic development**

**ETHICS & ACCOUNTABILITY** City government must maintain a higher standard of ethics, accountability and transparency to ensure the people of Houston continue to have confidence in City Hall. In my administration, we will demand accountability by building performance measures and milestones into economic development programs. The city must ensure that citizens receive fair value for their tax dollars. We will work aggressively to recover any city tax dollars spent with businesses that fail to follow through on their commitments.

- *Market-Driven Approach* – My approach to urban problems will be primarily market driven. We are one of the most business-friendly cities in the nation. In a time when taxpayers are asking the government to do more with less, I believe the city must work closely with the private sector to develop market-driven solutions that include tax incentives and partnerships with other government agencies.
- *Non-partisan Government* – Creating new jobs and opportunities is not a partisan issue. Houston is one of the most diverse cities in the nation, and we cannot allow ideological differences to prevent us from bringing the city together.

**JOB GROWTH** Houston's dynamic economy has positioned the city to be the center of international business and commerce. We need a mayor whose vision and experience will further enhance the pro-business environment that has allowed Houston to lead the nation in job growth. While we face economic challenges over the coming months, there is no city in the country better positioned than Houston to weather the storm. Houston can continue to grow and prosper in the coming years.

- *Take Advantage of New Economic Opportunities* – As our city grows, we must continue to expand our tax base by encouraging companies to relocate to Houston. As mayor, I will lead the way in creating jobs and opportunities for new and existing businesses. City government will maintain fiscal accountability; and we will seize every opportunity to promote Houston's dynamic economy to national and international markets.

- *Drawing New International Business to Houston* – Houston’s unique position as a cost effective, ethnically diverse transportation hub is primed to bring new businesses to the area. We will use Freeport Tax Exemptions and Foreign Trade Zones to create more manufacturing jobs. The expansion of the Panama Canal will create new opportunities for trade with Asia, Central and South America. Up to 40% of U.S. imports from Asia will pass through the expanded canal – Houston must be ready to capitalize on this opportunity.
- *Bring Economic Development into the Mayor’s Office* – We need a mayor who understands business and industry. As mayor, I will bring together an experienced, effective task force responsible for crafting a strategic plan and coordinating the city’s economic development efforts, including working with the Greater Houston Partnership and development of specific incentives to retain and grow existing businesses.

**SUPPORT NEW & EXISTING BUSINESSES** Small Business is the backbone of our economy. As a former small business owner, I know what small businesses need to grow. As Special Counsel to METRO and the Port of Houston Authority, I wrote some of the most successful Small Business plans in the country; and I will do it for the City of Houston.

- *Small Business Incubators* – Statistically, over 50% of small businesses fail in the first five years, many due to lack of experience and lack of capital. We must encourage and support innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as establish more effective small business incubators. We need institutions to help create a supportive environment that fosters win-win relationships among entrepreneurs, investors, institutions of higher learning, and government.
- *Strategic Investments* – As mayor, I will use every available tool to bring jobs to Houston. We will offer competitive performance-based tax incentives and economic development grants to create jobs, and expand developer participation agreements to help repair our aging infrastructure. Furthermore, I will direct the city to partner with private industry to develop business clusters for new industries, such as biotech and nanotechnology; and I will establish a utility incentive program to encourage dense development. Improving transportation in and around Houston will greatly benefit our local businesses.
- *Working with Small Businesses* – Our economic growth is driven primarily by engines such as the Texas Medical Center, the Port of Houston, and the Airport System. We must encourage large institutions and companies to utilize local small businesses. To do this, we will develop a Small Business plan that encourages our corporate citizens to utilize the vast network of critical services available through the small business base here in Houston. We will also implement innovative technologies that make it easy for large companies to find small business services for potential partnerships.
- *Public-Private Partnerships* – With extensive experience working with businesses and governments, of the most important lessons I have learned is the tremendous benefit of an effective partnership between the public and private sectors. These public-private partnerships will be a hallmark of my administration.

**ENERGY & ENTREPRENEURSHIP** Houston is a city of entrepreneurs. We are a city where we pull ourselves up from our bootstraps and make things happen. As mayor, I will make sure that businesses, investors, and entrepreneurs have the tools to create the jobs and the companies of the future. We have the pieces in place; now is the time to put them together.

- *Alternative Energy Capital* – Today, Houston is the energy capital of the world. We must maintain this status, and at the same time become the alternative energy capital of the world. We will work to pair viable alternative energy ideas with local entities that have the ability to bring those ideas to market. We will also create a forum that allows Houston to showcase new ideas and new technologies.
- *International Conference on Alternative Energy* – The city must play an active role in organizing a conference on alternative energy similar to the Offshore Technology Conference held annually in Houston. An annual alternative energy conference held six months apart from the Offshore Technology Conference would highlight Houston as a leader in emerging energy fields. We will involve our local universities and widen the focus to include carbon capture, bio-fuels and other new technologies.
- *Center for Alternative Energy* – The city, together with area universities, should establish a new center for alternative energy engineering and development. The University of Houston is already participating in a Department of Energy wind energy development program with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This new alternative energy center should focus on three to four renewable energy areas, such as wind, geothermal, solar, bio-fuels and nanotechnology. As part of the city's economic development strategic plan, the city should attempt to draw on the support, expertise and experience of its existing petrochemical industry, and the space technology available through the Johnson Space Center and its supporting contractors.
- *Support "Tier One" Status for UH* – This November we have an opportunity to vote for a measure that will lead to millions of dollars of economic development for the city and the region. Tier one status for the University of Houston means millions for research in vital industries like biotech and new energy research.

**EDUCATION** Without a well-trained work force, Houston will not be able to compete for the jobs of the businesses of tomorrow. The mayor needs to provide a helping hand to area school districts by partnering in connection with state and federal grants to help find funding for existing and expanded after-school programs.

- *Director for Education Policy* – Development of this position in the Mayor's Office will focus on aligning the needs of educators and businesses, as well as building collaborative efforts regionally to improve educational opportunities.
- *Job Training* – We will seek additional and increased funding for job training programs. The city will partner with unions, major employers and community colleges to create apprenticeship programs. My administration will also work with local universities and community colleges to identify job training needs and to facilitate filling those needs.