



The Greater Houston Partnership

Overview

The Greater Houston Partnership (GHP) is a private, nonprofit organization that formed in 1989 when the Houston Chamber of Commerce and the Houston Economic Development Council merged. A year later, the Houston World Trade Association also joined the partnership making it easily the largest business-led organization in the Houston metropolitan area. GHP's mission is to serve as the main advocate of Houston's business community and build economic prosperity in the region.

Regional Priorities

The Greater Houston Partnership recognizes that the Houston metropolitan area faces many challenges. Some of the most pressing are improving the educational system at all three levels — pre-K, K-12 and higher education. Leaders of GHP identify transportation (urban mobility) and meeting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's air quality standards as crucial regional challenges that also need to be addressed.

GHP has taken an active role in finding solutions to solve these regional problems. With education, GHP has an Education and Workforce Advisory Committee that has been highly involved with the Houston Independent School District (HISD) as well as the other 61 school districts in the region. GHP addresses academic standards; administration, budgets, physical plant and construction; and classroom activities.

For example, GHP conducted a complete analysis of student academic performance. GHP monitored areas such as accountability, dropout rate and students' performance on the Texas Academic Assessment of Skills (TAAS), Stanford 9 tests and the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). GHP has also worked with the administrations from various school districts on bonding issues. Finally, in the area of higher education, GHP "monitors" the community college Board of Trustees by having a representative from GHP sit in on every meeting to gain awareness about its latest issues and decisions.

ORGANIZATIONAL SNAPSHOT

Type of Organization

Exclusively led by companies or employers

Unit of Membership

Company/organization

Number of Members

2003: 1,776
1998: 2,025

Membership by Company Size

Small Companies: 77%
Mid-sized Companies: 14%
Large Companies: 9%

Dues Determined by

Number of company employees

Annual Dues Paid by

Largest Member Companies: \$19,200
Smallest Member Companies: \$500

Annual Operating Budget

2003: \$5 million or more
1998: \$5 million or more

Staff Members (FTE)

2003: 4
1998: 4

Board Members

2003: 78
1998: 70

Regional Priorities

Education; Infrastructure; Workforce Development; Economic Development; Regional Planning; International Trade

GULF COAST REGIONAL MOBILITY PARTNERS

The Gulf Coast Regional Mobility Partners is an initiative that was created by the Greater Houston Partnership to advocate for additional transportation funding for the eight-county Houston-Galveston region. Consisting of a region-wide coalition of community and business interests, transportation providers and elected officials, the group strives to improve the region's transportation system by lobbying state officials. One of the group's key successes was its work on House Bill 3588. Here, it played a key role in shaping the bill to include bond financing for the Texas Department of Transportation and funding for the Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan.

As the Houston metropolitan region continues to grow in population, transportation/urban mobility has also become a high priority. Over the last four years, GHP has developed a strategy to bring more transportation dollars to the region, improve the regional transportation efficiency and decrease air pollution. In 2000, GHP released its Travel Rate Improvement Plan (TRIP), which provided recommendations for increasing the region's transportation funding and enhancing communication among public, private and government leaders.

GHP also created an initiative called Gulf Coast Regional Mobility Partners (GCRMP), a coalition of community and business interests, transportation providers and elected officials to advocate for additional transportation funding for the Houston-Galveston region. (See box at top of page.)

Most recently, GHP teamed up with the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) to secure passage of a public referendum authorizing METRO to borrow \$640 million in bonds to fund the first 10 years of a 25-year plan for a light rail system.

Structure and Operations

The Greater Houston Partnership is a large organization with more than 1,900 business members. It is the most dominant business-led organization in the region. GHP is organized into seven operating divisions: Regional Planning; Regional Issues; Economic Development; World Trade; Government Relations; Member Services; and Resources.

Moreover, GHP has a staff of 75 employees and over 60 committees covering a wide array of issues such as business, environment, education and workforce development, quality of life, economic development, transportation and trade. GHP also has a steady supply of help with more than 2,230 active volunteers. In order to run such a large organization, GHP relies on a large portion of business membership dues to support its annual operating budget. For example, roughly 88% of annual revenue comes from member dues, publication sales and events, with the remainder coming from government contracts.