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732,967 CONVENTION AND MEETING ROOM NIGHTS BOOKED

144,590 ROOM NIGHTS BOOKED THROUGH INTERNATIONAL LEISURE AND REUNIONS

6 million VISITORS THROUGH THE VISIT HOUSTON NETWORK OF WEBSITES

### 140 members

ADDED TO THE CITY'S LARGEST NETWORK OF HOSPITALITY BUSINESSES

\$54.4 million

**GENERATED FOR LOCAL ECONOMY THROUGH** FILM AND COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

2015 KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



### LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members

There's no question about it. This is a great time to be in Houston's hospitality business and its related sectors.

Our town and the entire Gulf Coast region are enjoying growth despite the downturn in the energy sector. Some have experienced job loss, for sure, but to be certain this kind of inevitable economic cycle is something we know how to endure. In fact, some businesses have found ways to thrive.

Houston continues to experience new hotel construction and that benefits our membership and better positions us to sell Houston as a destination. Residential construction, both downtown and in the surrounding areas, will create additional retail and restaurant offerings, which are key elements for attracting visitors.

The media is also recognizing our city as one of the top cultural and culinary destinations in the nation. Houston has a long history of blazing new trails and leading through innovation. This passionate drive, plus our remarkable collaboration between the public and private sectors, is making Houston a better place to live, work and play.

As you will read in the ensuing pages, 2015 was another year with positive year-overyear results in all departments. Nevertheless technology continues to alter both business and leisure pursuits in ways that require daily monitoring. And, as each member can vouch for, the speed at which these changes take place can be confounding.

That is why Visit Houston continually works to establish, and then refine, metrics to define success. We build and develop strategic plans by segment and then adjust our benchmarks based on results. I want the Visit Houston team to be recognized as one of the most progressive, innovative, nimble and customer-centric sales and marketing organizations in the country. I firmly believe that our resources, talent, vision and alignment give us a competitive advantage against other cities.

As we elevate our game, I ask that our members, partners, hoteliers and board members follow suit. Now is the time to further demonstrate the value of tourism in Houston. To enhance that visitor experience. we have to improve transportation, better connect areas of our city, and continue to market the total Houston brand. Unveiling the new assets around the George R. Brown Convention Center will continue to be a priority.

The future could not be more exciting for our city. Everyone knows the Super Bowl is coming here in a few months. And just like the NCAA Final Four held here this year, Houston will shine as few other host cities have. Houston is a premier destination. Let's enjoy the spotlight!

Your team is poised and ready to serve you our board, our members, our customers and

President, Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau



### LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members.

What a ride we are on! As you know, Houston enjoyed tremendous exposure from hosting the NCAA Final Four earlier this year and now we are currently readying the city to host Super Bowl LI in February. I cannot think of another time during my decades in the hospitality business when Houston has had more opportunity to spotlight our great city to the rest of the world.

Gone are the days of feeling second to other destinations. With increasing strength in everything from attractions to the arts, culinary to lodging, Houston's hospitality sector can hold its head high. I hear it among my peers in the hotel industry and beyond, this is an unprecedented time. And as you will see in this report, the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau is taking advantage of this chance to make our city even better. New records were achieved in many departments last year and I know, with Mike Waterman's continued leadership, even more great things are still to come.

As this organization continues its record of achievement, I ask that our members, partners and board members follow suit. Now is the time to further demonstrate the value of tourism in Houston. To enhance that visitor experience, we have to improve transportation, better connect areas of our city and continue to market the total Houston brand. I believe re-imagination of the convention district, which will be complete later this year, will help us to market and sell the Houston experience like never before.

Thank you for your service as a member of our organization. These days, Houston's star is shining brighter than ever. And I'm confident that the team we've put together will continue to capitalize on the great opportunities that lie ahead.

Wich Massage

Chair, Board of Directors
Greater Houston Convention
and Visitors Bureau

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Chris K. Wilmot Glory Infrastructure, Inc.

Mark Yanke Hotel Emma

10

Houston just might be the most surprising city in America.

This big-business town has always had a soft spot for world-class art: Its oak-tree-lined Museum District has 20 institutions, including the privately assembled Menil Collection, the Museum of Fine Arts, and the non-denominational Rothko Chapel.

There is no shortage of beautiful weirdness in the country's fourth-largest city.

A city that pleases
everybody sounds
too good to be true,
but with endless
dining options that
will satisfy any
foodie, vast brewery
selections, colorful
theaters and drama
productions of every
genre, a fierce music
scene and an
architectural history
that's unmatched,
Greater Houston just

might be that place.

Houston is one of the great eating capitals of America.

Once the domain of 10-gallon hats and plate-sized belt buckles, Space City now has an edgier vibe. These days you're just as likely to glimpse suede Gucci driving loafers, Lilliputian pocket squares and fedoras as you are cowboy dude regalia. Groundbreaking chefs, pioneering artists, hipster farmers and denizens with a yen for ecology stir life into the mix.

Houston will surprise you. The city has been referred to as a modern day Ellis Island, where more than 145 languages are spoken.

**Houston** is the city of the future. By about 2040, most Americans will trace their ancestry to somewhere other than Europe—that's already the case in Houston. the city's blend of Latinos. Anglos, and people of African and Asian descent is a glimpse into the nation's demographic destiny.

Preservation magazine

Travel + Leisure

Washington Post

Smart Meetings

The New York Times

Destinations of the World

Yahoo News

Southern Living

# **DESTINATION SALES**

The mission of the Destination Sales department is to generate and convert the greatest possible number of hotel room nights from trade shows, conventions, meetings and special events while promoting and selling the Houston area as a world-class meeting destination. The Sales team strives to reach its annual goals through direct sales activity and meeting planner networking during attendance at major industry events and trade shows, direct marketing and city hosted visits.

In addition to citywide conventions, the sales team also facilitates single-hotel, in-house groups. In 2015, the Destination Sales team contracted 460 groups for a total of 732,967 room nights, achieving 118% of its annual goal.

Groups using convention facilities afford the opportunity to place business in multiple hotels and among our hospitality partners. This year, the Sales team secured 69 contracts for groups with meetings convening at the George R. Brown or NRG convention centers.

SIGNIFICANT NEW BOOKINGS IN 2015

#### Rotary International

+25,000 attendees

National Association of Drug Court Professionals +5,000 attendees

#### American Nurses Association

+8,500 attendees

Association of Equipment Manufacturers

+7,000 attendees

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages +7.500 attendees

American Association of Diabetes Educators

+4,500 attendees

American Society for Blood & Marrow Transplantation +2.500 attendees

Hospitality Financial and Technology Professionals +5,500 attendees

SIGNIFICANT MEETINGS HOSTED IN 2015

#### Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc,

+13,800 attendees

#### Microsoft AES

3,268 attendees

#### ABB, Inc.

+8,000 attendees

#### Shriners International

+8,500 attendees

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

+5,000 attendees

### American Bar Association

+3,600 attendees

#### Passion Conferences

+14,000 attendees

Texas High School Coaches Association

+10,300 attendees

732,967
TOTAL ROOM NIGHTS BOOKED
EXCEEDING 2015 GOAL BY 18%

459,197

TOTAL ROOM NIGHTS FROM CITYWIDE CONVENTIONS ACHIEVING 104% OF 2015 GOAL

**1,268** TENTATIVE LEADS 2015 UP FROM **1,100** LEADS IN 2014

2.9 million

TENTATIVE ROOM NIGHTS

UP FROM **2.4 MILLION** IN 2014

14

## **TOURISM**

The Tourism department is charged with the promotion of the Greater Houston area as a destination with the goal of increasing leisure travel to Houston. These efforts are measured in increased returns for area hotels, attractions, restaurants and others in the hospitality sector. The department is also tasked with working with the Houston hospitality industry to assist in leisure promotional efforts and encourage the creation of new leisure products.

Tourism actively works with domestic and international travel trade, including wholesale, retail, online agencies and tour operators in order to reach the traveling consumer. The Tourism team participates in travel and consumer trade shows and organizes sales missions and familiarization trips to reach key clients in its top markets. The department also handles visits to Houston by international media and manages the Spanish website and social media presence to generate exposure for Houston in Spanish speaking countries. Additionally, Tourism manages agencies representing the city in its top five international markets: Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom, China and Germany.

Tourism secured 144,590 leisure room nights from international markets by working with wholesalers, tour operators, receptive operators and retail travel agents as well as focusing on the reunions market.

On the international PR front, the department secured 748 media placements, with a total of 9.8 million impressions which generated \$11.3 million in positive media value for the year. The Spanish-language website VisitaHoustonTexas.com logged more than 442,000 visits in 2015, a 78% increase over the prior year. The accompanying Twitter and Facebook accounts grew to 5,263 and 13,680 respectively through in-house efforts and help from Visit Houston's Mexico office. Tourism also trained 5,005 travel professionals around the world on how to sell Houston as a leisure destination, more than double the department's annual goal.

In 2015, Tourism developed and executed the first Houston Tourism Summit, giving members the opportunity to interact, find out more about Tourism's new direction and to learn about marketing opportunities to promote their products to leisure travelers.

The Tourism Summit further served as an opportunity to unveil the Houston First Matching Grant Program. The program allows hospitality partners to partner up to apply for funding for initiatives that could directly bring travelers to Houston from beyond a 150-mile radius. In total there were 27 applicants for the program of which 14 groups received grants to promote their products. A total of \$250,000 in grants were awarded.

Finally, the Tourism department led an effort to create a cooperative marketing initiative for regional destination marketing organizations under the Visit Houston umbrella. Visit Houston and Beyond includes the cities of Alvin, Beaumont, Conroe, the Woodlands, Galveston, Baytown, Deer Park, Sugar Land, Huntsville, Bay Area Houston, Tomball, Pearland, Port Arthur and Brazosport. Partners have already come together on a new marketing effort and plans are underway to attend major trade and consumer shows.

144,590

TOTAL INTERNATIONAL LEISURE AND REUNION ROOM NIGHTS EXCEEDING 2015 GOAL BY 44%

442,000 visitors
TO THE SPANISH-LANGUAGE WEBSITE, 113% OF 2015 GOAL

5,005 TRAVEL PROFESSIONALS TRAINED IN SELLING HOUSTON

**500%** OF 2015 GOAL

**4.000** NEW SPANISH LANGUAGE SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS A 26% INCREASE OVER 2014



# MEMBERSHIP

The mission of the Membership department is to develop and implement programs that support membership growth, revenue and retention, through education, engagement, and economic opportunity.

The Membership department works with all other divisions to support and promote the organization's overall objective of attracting convention, meetings and visitors to Houston. This collaboration enhances the membership program, helping retain existing members and grow the base. The alignment with Houston First has continued to expand business opportunities for members and make membership more attractive.

The primary Membership goal is to increase the core membership base of 1,200 organizations by implementing a strategic plan to actively identify and convert business prospects into members.

A total of 140 new members were added in 2015. Membership met their membership engagement goals with 6 engagements and member connection business opportunities. This included a Houston Super Bowl Business Showcase, a Summer Connection, Certified Tourism Ambassador Rally and membership involvement with the inaugural Houston Tourism Summit. The Annual Membership Appreciation Holiday Open House recognized 19 members for being event supporters and contributing goods and services throughout the year.

95% 2015 MEMBERSHIP RETENTION RATE

EXCEEDING 2015 GOAL BY 11%

\_\_\_\_\_ REACHING 100% OF 2015 GOAL \_\_\_\_\_

140 / 180 NEW MEMBERS RECRUITED IN 2015 REACHING **77%** OF 2015 GOAL



# \$20 million

2015 ECONOMIC IMPACT TO GREATER HOUSTON AREA EXCEEDING 2015 GOAL BY **33%** 

> 17,000 **ROOM NIGHTS GENERATED IN 2015 EXCEEDING 2015 GOAL BY** 2,000 room nights

**SPACECOM** 

1,700 **ATTENDEES**  COMICPALOOZA

40,000 **ATTENDEES** 

MEDICAL WORLD AMERICAS

2,300 **ATTENDEES** 

## **MARKETING**

The Marketing department promotes the Greater Houston area as a convention, business and tourism destination. These efforts include advertising, public relations, sponsorship, special events, promotions, website and collateral development.

The more people the organization is able to reach, the greater its influence. In 2015, just over 6 million people visited the Houston CVB's web network, which includes: VisitHouston.com, VisitaHoustonTexas.com (Spanish) (now HolaHouston.com), MyGayHouston.com, HoustonCulinaryTours.com, IDoHou.com and HoustonReunions.com, representing a 30% increase over the previous year.

Moreover, the network of websites generated 187,000 room nights in 2015 and direct spending of \$116 million from the leisure visitor market.

The 2016 advertising efforts included a national print campaign in the *Wall Street Journal* and digital placement in *New York Times*' news, lifestyle and dining sections. The local TV and cable broadcast ads aired in the Texas and Louisiana markets featuring the

My Houston campaign. New in 2016 and also part of the My Houston campaign, a new TV spot was created and aired featuring Kam Franklin and The Suffers. The TV spot showcased Market Square Park and the Downtown Mural, as well as referenced iconic Houston landmarks.

The international advertising efforts increased with dedicated media buys targeting key markets in Mexico, including Guadalajara, Monterrey and Mexico City. Marketing's domestic public relations efforts placed Houston in the national spotlight with more than 300 media placements generated by pitches and media visits. These placements contributed to \$18 million in positive publicity for the city in 2015. High profile placements included pieces in the Washington Post, Forbes Travel, USA Today, the Wall Street Journal and Travel + Leisure.

ROOM NIGHTS GENERATED FROM WEB

**187,000** 

6 million visitors

TO THE VISITHOUSTON.COM NETWORK OF SITES EXCEEDING 2015 GOAL BY **7%** 

315

MEDIA GENERATED FROM JOURNALIST VISITS OR PITCHES SURPASSING 2015 GOAL BY **80%** 

62/90 COORDINATED INTERVIEWS

# HOUSTON FILM COMMISSION

The mission of the Houston Film Commission is to increase the number of film and video projects shot in the Houston area and build a sustainable film infrastructure. A healthy film industry puts heads in beds, creates jobs, expands the tax base and enhances the image and visibility of the greater Houston community.

In 2015, the Houston Film Commission recorded 210 film and video projects representing 855 shooting days Direct spending locally by the film industry in 2015 totaled \$18.5 million with a total economic impact of

Major projects filmed in Houston in 2015 included commercials for Vodafone, Nike, Ford, Bose and Taco Bell. The latter being voted one of the 10 best commercials during Super Bowl 2016. The Johnson Space Center was the location of the international One Direction Drag Me Down music video. The video was tweeted about 22,000 times per minute the first day of release and won Best Music Video during the 2016 British Music Awards.

The Houston Film Commission also continues to have a strong presence at major industry events including the Los Angeles, Austin, Dallas and Sundance film festivals, the American Film Market and SXSW. These events allow the Commission to connect with producers and filmmakers and more effectively market the Houston region as a film and video destination.

TELEVISION SERIES SHOT IN HOUSTON 2015

Married to Medicine

H-Town Hustle

Sisters in Law

The Little Couple

House Hunters International

**Good After Bad** 

**Border Town** 

Be Not Afraid

Pizza Joint

\$54.4 million ECONOMIC IMPACT, REACHING 90.7% OF GOAL

855 days of FILMING TOOK PLACE IN 2015 EXCEEDING GOAL BY 6%

\$18.5 million

DIRECT EXPENDITURES IN 2015 REACHING 90.7% OF GOAL

**210**/200 FILM & VIDEO

**23**/25

**249**/250 PROJECT SPECIFIC





\$138,725

REVENUE GENERATED IN 2015 ACHIEVING **96%** OF GOAL

**17,102**WALK-IN VISITORS IN 2015 **86%** OF GOAL

8,144
PHONE CALLS
103% OF GOAL

**13,328**MAILINGS **144%** OF GOAL

40,884
SOCIAL NETWORK REACH
EXCEEDING 2015 GOAL BY 36%

### **GREATER HOUSTON CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU**

\*STATEMENTS OF REVENUES, EXPENSES AND CHANGES IN FINANCIAL POSITION FOR THE YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2015 AND 2014

	** 12/31/2015 12/31/2014		
REVENUES			
Public Sources	\$ -	\$ 10,386,188	
Private Sector	1,543,869	2,029,820	
TOTAL REVENUES	1,543,869	12,416,008	
EXPENSES			
Operations & Administration	507,868	2,335,585	
Convention Sales/Services	1,916,702	3,832,915	
International Group Sales and Tourism	<b>–</b> 1,008,365		
Private Sector Services	5,335	440,989	
Film Commission	_	229,753	*Unaudited Report- Audited report
Protocol Alliance	_	220,324	available after September 30, 2016 **GHCVB realigned with Houston
Advertising & Promotional	_	3,134,894	First Corporation July 1, 2014 (see Structure and Funding).
TOTAL EXPENSES	2,429,905	11,202,825	Calendar Year 2015 reflects the realignment being in place for 12 months while Calendar Year 2014
NET ASSET (DECREASE)	\$ (886,036)	\$ 1,213,183	reflects only six (6) months of the new structure.

# GREATER HOUSTON CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

\*STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION DECEMBER 31, 2015 AND 2014

		12/31/2015		12/31/2014
ASSETS				
Current Assets:				
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$	9,536,415	\$	10,556,073
Accounts Receivable		591,071		676,400
Prepaid Expenses		80,499		83,974
Inventory		-		6,758
Total Current Assets		10,207,985		11,323,205
Non-current Assets:				
Property and Equipment - Net		369,367		590,312
Investments in Other Entities		1,052,200		435,000
Deposits		66,100		66,101
Total Assets		11,695,652		12,414,618
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS				
Current Liabilities:				
Accounts Payable		( 41)		91,089
Deferred Revenue		264,221		7,500
Accrued Expenses		140,649		140,757
Total Current Liabilities		404,828		239,346
Agency Obligations	_	105,403		103,815
Unrestricted Net Assets		11,185,421		12,071,457
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$	11,695,652	\$	12,414,618

\*Unaudited Report- Audited report available after September 30, 2016

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