

HOUSTON PLAYBOOK

For Start-Ups and Scale-Ups





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“Everything is bigger in Texas”

WHY TEXAS?

Although Texas is known for its massive size in both land and spirit, the state’s motto is “Friendship.” These two characteristics do a great job of defining the people of this great state who are always hungry for opportunity and are willing to help each other out to get there. Texas is the second largest State in the USA, with a population of 29 million and a GDP of \$1,886 billion in 2019, so it offers interesting opportunities for your company. More than 70 percent of the total population of the state lives in the aptly named Texas Triangle, which covers the region between Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio and Austin, and is one of the eleven [megaregions in the United States](#).

Trade between the United States and the Netherlands is hugely important for both economies. The result of this trade is 825,000 jobs created in the U.S., and Texas is the strongest trade partner with the Netherlands among the 50 states. An estimated 80,000 jobs in Texas are supported by Dutch-American investment.

Historically, Silicon Valley and Seattle have been the tech destinations for the U.S., but over the last two decades the trend has shifted towards other parts of the country. Companies that once looked at a location on either American coast as an advantage are increasingly considering the logistical and cost advantages of locating in Texas.

Watch the video

Do you want to learn why Dutch entrepreneurs think Texas is one of the best places to run a business?

[Watch the video “Why Texas”.](#)





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Introduction to Houston

Houston is the largest city in Texas and is a main hub in the region. George Bush Intercontinental Airport is a hub for many direct flights to international destinations; the Houston Airport System boarded and deplaned almost 60 million passengers in 2019. The Port of Houston ranks first in the nation for waterborne tonnage, imports, export tonnage and breakbulk. It is strategically located at the Gulf of Mexico and connected with the hinterland via the largest U.S. rail and road infrastructure.

The entrepreneurial spirit runs deep in Houston.

In fact, the Kauffman Index for Entrepreneurial Activity ranked Houston among the top big cities. In the last couple of years there has been a boom in specialized organizations, such as incubators, accelerators, hackathons, demo days and meetups.

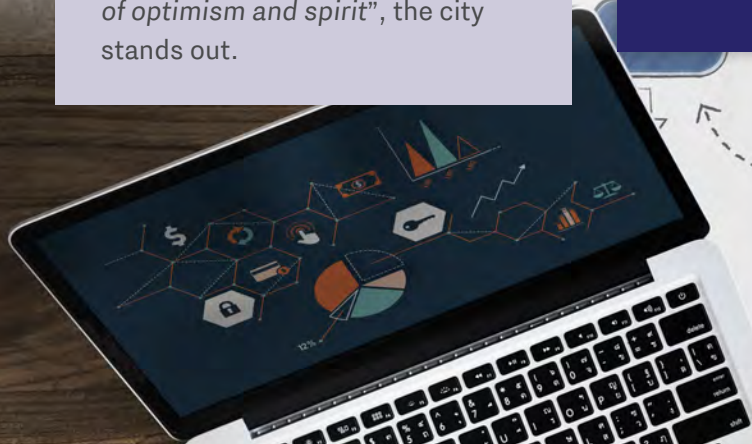
Houston has a long tradition as an energy hub; it's home to more than 4,650 energy-related firms. Not surprisingly, a good deal of start-up activity is focused on energy services and clean energy. At the same time, the wealth created by the energy business has spilled over to other areas, including education, the arts and healthcare.

“Alive with energy and rich in diversity, Houston is a dynamic mix of imagination, talent and first-class attractions that makes it a world-class city. Home to a vibrant economy, beautiful surroundings and a population full of optimism and spirit”, the city stands out.

[The Texas Medical Center](#) is the largest medical center in the world and a center of research and healthcare ventures focusing on everything from curing cancer to improving medical advice.

**“If you can dream it,
you can do it in Houston”**

START UP



XX01	✓
XX02	✓

It is the 4th largest urban area in the USA. Houston has a young and diverse population. The median age is only 32.9 years and one in four of the residents are foreign-born.

Houston boasts more than 40 colleges, university and institutions - offering higher education options to suit all interests. The leading economic sectors in Houston are, energy and energy services, manufacturing, logistics (Port Houston) medical services (Texas Medical Center) and technology development across these fields. The Netherlands is the 5th largest trading partner of Houston.

Houston by the NUMBERS



INHABITANTS

City of Houston 2.3 Million
Greater Houston Area 7.1 Million



UNIVERSITIES

14



AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE

\$26.20



START-UPS

1.861



TOP SECTORS

- Advanced Tech & Manufacturing
- Chemicals
- Aerospace & Aviation
- Life Science & Health
- Information Technology
- Renewable Energy



Events

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Houston's Start-up demo day

Come out to hear a select group of Houston's local startups come pitch their company, status and where they are headed next. Hear feedback from local mentors & entrepreneurs as they offer insight to each pitch.

[Link](#)

NBSO Houston Events Calendar

Our NBSO Houston website includes an upcoming events calendar that is updated regularly.

[Link](#)

Houston Start-up Digest

Comparable to Eventbrite, however StartupDigest is focused on start-up events. You can subscribe to weekly overviews of future events on the website.

[Link](#)

Houston Exponential

Houston Exponential organizes several events and trainings each month for entrepreneurs and people who are interested in new opportunities within Houston's tech ecosystem.

[Link](#)

Houston Lean Startup Circle Meetup

The Houston Lean Startup Circle meetup group was inspired by Eric Ries and Steve Blank to provide entrepreneurs with education on lean startup practices.

[Link](#)

City of Houston Hackathon

The Houston Hackathon is a civic hackathon to solve problems that affect the greater public—such as traffic information, voter registration, or recycling programs, just to name a few.

[Link](#)

HATCH Pitch

HATCH Pitch is competition with an integrated mentorship component. They started at SXSW interactive, and then they became an independent program and event.

[Link](#)

Open Houston

This organization promotes Houston ecosystem through events, programs, and by connecting entrepreneurs, investors, and experts.

[Link](#)

George R. Brown Convention Center Calendar

The George R. Brown Convention Center (GRB) hosts large trade shows and business forums throughout the year, which you can find in its online event calendar.

[Link](#)

Station Houston Events

One of Houston's tech-oriented coworking spaces, Station Houston, regularly hosts events with expert speakers that are open to the public to connect the startup and tech communities in Houston.

[Link](#)



Main players

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Houston Exponential

Houston Exponential (HX) is a non-profit organization created to accelerate the growth of Houston's innovation ecosystem. HX is leading the charge to turn Houston into a hub for high-growth high-potential companies by creating pathways for innovation to flow at scale. They attract and promote startups, investors, corporations, government, and universities.

[Link](#)

Impact Hub

Impact Hub Houston is a nonprofit organization that inspires, connects and empowers people working to solve social problems in the city and beyond. Impact Hub Houston designs places, platforms and programs to build an inclusive innovation ecosystem and equitably empower diverse changemakers, social entrepreneurs, and impact supporters.

[Link](#)

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Coworking spaces and Innovation hubs

Coworking spaces and innovation hubs are valuable places for start-ups to collaborate and network while keeping overhead low. Such buildings have been booming in Houston in recent years, offering budding entrepreneurs cheap, short-term office space, a coveted downtown address, and infrastructure like IT support staff that small business couldn't afford otherwise.

One of the most important innovation hubs in the city is [Houston Exponential \(HX\)](#), that aims to make Houston one of the top innovation "ecosystems" in the country and create 10,000 new technology jobs by 2022. It's also looking to help Houston-based startups land \$2 billion in venture capital investments. HX also offers collaborative and flexible working spaces in the heart of Midtown, where entrepreneurs can have access to multiple benefits with a high-growth environment.





Overview of coworking spaces

The Ion

The Ion is a 300,000 square-foot structure designed to bring Houston's entrepreneurial, corporate, and academic communities together into collaborative spaces and programs. The former Sears Building will support businesses at all stages of the innovation lifecycle and provide resources for Houstonians seeking to participate in the innovation economy as a part of the South Main Innovation District.

[Link](#)

In this same line, [Station Houston](#) is a true hub for Houston's tech startups and entrepreneurs. Though it opened only in 2016, it has grown quickly to include 180 startups, 350 members, and 130 mentors from the Houston community. Station goes beyond coworking by hosting regular workshops to help startups become integrated into Houston's tech community and learn the skills they need to secure their first customers. Their network of expert mentors is also invaluable to those new to the Houston community.

Other example of Houston's new economy is [Republic Square](#), located in the former ExxonMobil Chemical campus in the Energy Corridor. Plans to develop the property with office towers, a hotel, luxury apartments, shops, and restaurants got scrapped during the latest oil bust. Now the place reborn as a 35-acre coworking space and has already attracted 70 new tenants, including entrepreneurs and incubators.

The Cannon

With 3 different locations in Houston, The Cannon is an innovation infrastructure provider that operates a growing network of innovation hubs for startups, entrepreneurs, investors and corporate innovators. From adviser and investor networks to educational seminars to professional networking events to co-working space, The Cannon offers a spectrum of critical resources.

[Link](#)



Overview of coworking spaces (continued)

Wi-CO WORK

This coworking space is a completely renovated house turned shared office space, it is beautifully decorated and is full of character. The staff encourages a true coworking atmosphere with weekly happy hours and seminars.

[Link](#)

RED Labs at the University of Houston

RED Labs co working space and accelerator program gives students access to space, mentors and other resources, including unlimited coffee and ramen to launch their ideas.

[Link](#)

TMC3

This is a new facility in the heart of the Texas medical center that will bring 30,000 new jobs and \$5.2 billion to Houston. The new research facility will bring research and scientists from top facilities like Baylor College of Medicine, Texas A&M University Health Science Center, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. The massive new hub will boast 139,354 square meters of collaborative research space.

[Link](#)

The Work Lodge

Located in The Woodlands and Vintage Park and it offers more than just a shared office space. Their Micro-Incubation offers Workspace, Business Development and Planning assistance, Professional Services support and the opportunity to present to their panel of Angel Investors.

[Link](#)

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Incubators & Accelerators

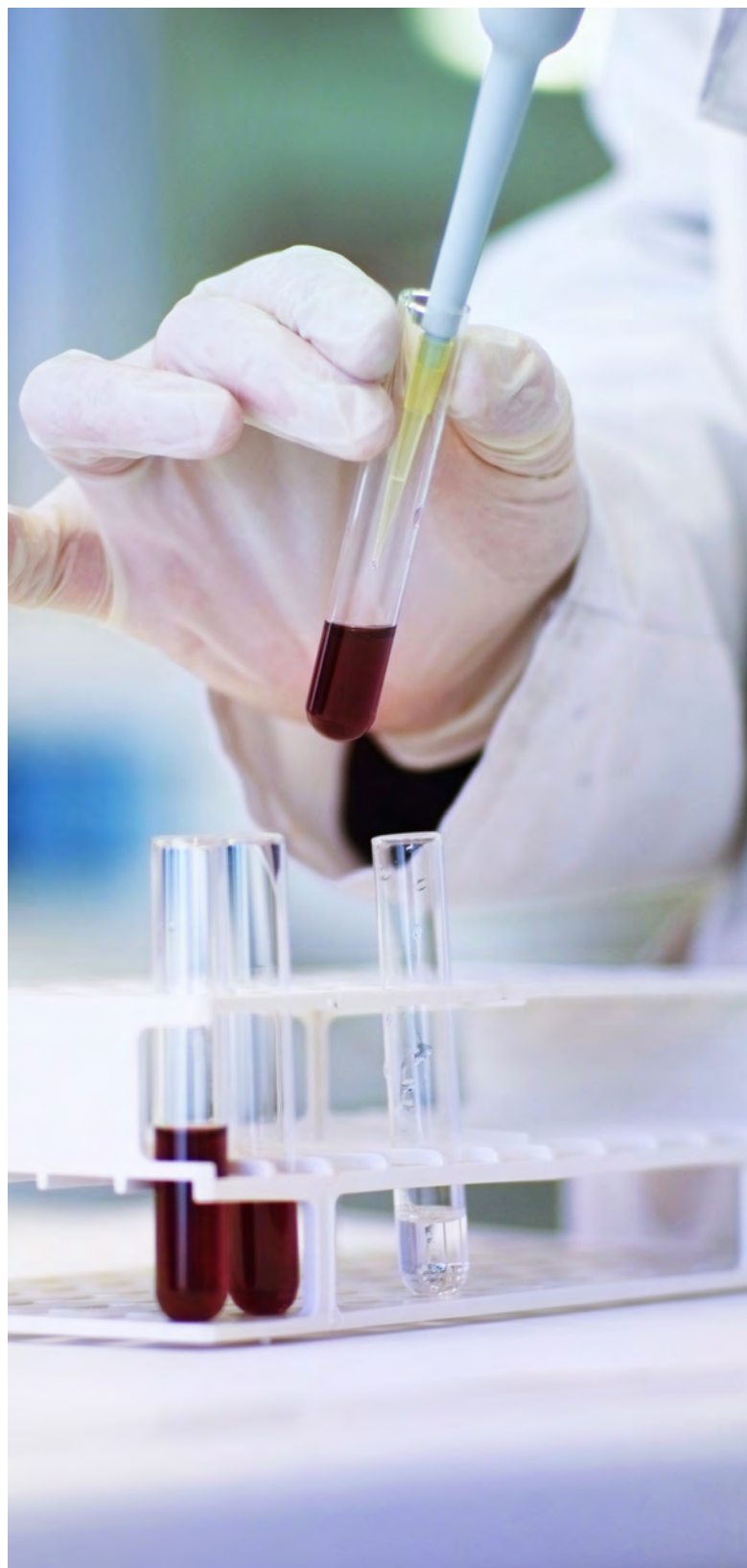
JLABS @ TMC (Johnson & Johnson Innovation)

The motto of JLABS is “giving early discovery every advantage for success.” JLABS focuses on supporting emerging pharmaceutical, medical device, consumer and digital health companies through the tenuous time between early discovery and having the necessary resources to move a product through the path to commercialization.

They give companies every tangible advantage to succeed, providing access to core research facilities hosting specialized capital equipment, educational programs, operational capabilities and a community of like-minded entrepreneurs. JLABS also provides access to Johnson & Johnson Innovation deal teams expanding opportunities for venture capital funding, as well as the deal-making, therapeutic and technology area, product development and commercialization expertise of Johnson & Johnson. Therapeutic areas of focus include oncology, immunology, neuroscience, cardiovascular and metabolism, infectious diseases and vaccines.

Jlabs can offer more resources than TMCx (including dry and wet labs), but they do have a profit objective. As a startup you'll need to bring 6 months' worth of profit to the table. J-labs is the bird's eye for innovations for Johnson & Johnson.

[Link](#)



Texas Medical Center accelerator (TMCx)

The TMCx accelerator advances the development of health and medical technology companies by connecting visionary entrepreneurs to the abundant resources of the Texas Medical Center. Located in the TMC Innovation Institute, the program provides startup companies with shared workspace, a curriculum tailored to the needs of health care entrepreneurs, a variety of workshops and hands-on events and the guidance of over 120 advisors from the front lines of the industry. Companies have access to the world's largest medical center, all without membership fees or equity sharing.

TMC is a nonprofit organization. They offer an accelerator program (TMCx) for early stage startups. They'll provide mandatory classes on how to start a business, from a legal, medical, financial and business perspective. They also offer a Biodesign Fellowship, providing an opportunity for eight people to develop a medical novelty and test the marketability of that device.

The teams are a mixture of people with a medical (clinical), business or engineering background, there are two teams divided by their focus on either digital health or biotech.

TMC Innovation also offers an incubator program (TMCx plus) for further established start-ups.

[Link](#)

Greentown Labs

As the largest climatetech startup incubator in North America, Greentown Labs brings together startups, corporates, investors, politicians, and many others with a focus on scaling climate solutions. Through their new location in Houston, Greentown Labs aims to be the catalyst for Houston's energy transition by creating a supportive, collaborative, and inspiring community for early-stage climatetech entrepreneurs to grow their businesses.

[Link](#)

Pumps and Pipes

Pumps and Pipes is an accelerator for innovative technology development and has various partner programs to encourage private innovation initiatives and application of space technology in areas related to the space industry, like biomedical, life sciences and the energy sector.

[Link](#)

South Main Innovation District

The South Main Innovation District is centrally located at the intersection of innovation activity in Houston. The district will offer a mix of uses to create a thriving innovation ecosystem, accompanied by a diverse and inclusive public realm, that will foster technology, startups and entrepreneurship.

[Link](#)

There are many Incubators & Accelerators in Houston. They are listed below based on the sector. More information can be found when you click on the link.

Social and environmental

- [Fruition Technoloy Lab](#)
- [Greentown Labs](#)

University incubators

- [RED Labs at the University of Houston](#)
- [Rice Alliance for Technology and Entrepreneurship](#)
- [Small Business Development Center \(SBDC\) at the University of Houston](#)
- [3 Day Startup \(3DS\)](#)

Life Science & Health

- [BioHouston](#)
- [Biotechnology Commercialization Center \(BCC\) at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston](#)
- [Fannin Innovation Studios](#)
- [NextHIT \(Houston Health Ventures\)](#)
- [NSBRI Industry Forum \(National Space Biomedical Research Institute\)](#)

High Tech & Energy

- [Business Technology Center \(BTC\) at Houston Business Development Inc.](#)
- [MIT Enterprise Forum Texas](#)
- [Red House Associates](#)
- [Shell Game Changer](#)
- [Station Houston](#)
- [Technology Incubator West Houston \(TIWH\)](#)
- <https://www.houstonh2o.org/>
- <http://www.accelerateh2o.org/>

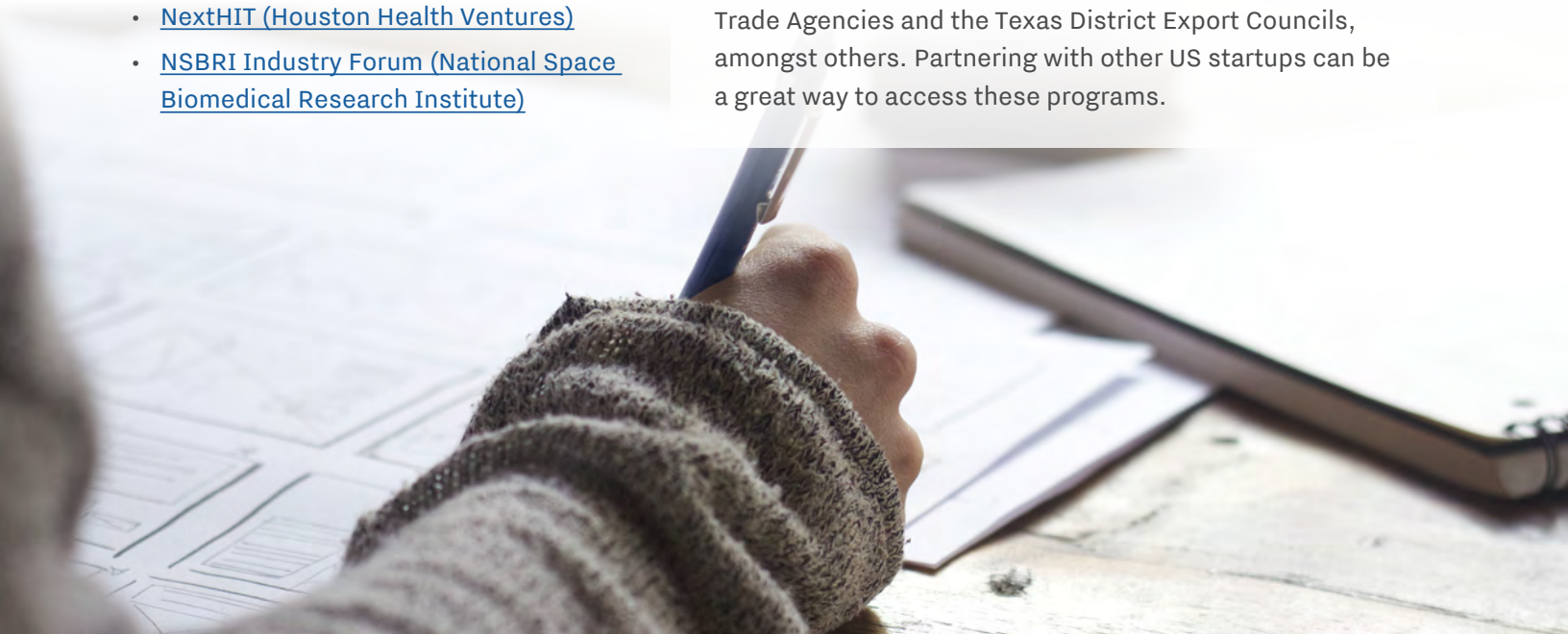
Creative

- [Houston Arts Incubator](#)
- [TechShop](#)

Port Houston

Port Houston has a special program to support local small businesses, through its [Small Business Development Program](#) and the [Local Preference Procurement Program](#). By registering with this program, small businesses are enabled and encouraged to bid for contracts in the Port.

International trade development and trade financing programs are further available via for example the EXIM Bank, the Small Business Support Office's International Trade Agencies and the Texas District Export Councils, amongst others. Partnering with other US startups can be a great way to access these programs.



Crowdfunding, Venture capital & Angel investors

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For both investors and entrepreneurs looking for investors, a good online platform 'to empower business owners and everyday people to invest in one another'.

[Link](#)



Cannon Ventures

This investor network helps angel and institutional investors connect with promising startups and master venture investing.

[Link](#)

Mercury Fund

Mercury Fund focuses solely on seed and early-stage ventures.

[Link](#)

HX Venture Fund

HX Venture Fund links world-class corporations, technology innovation, and high-growth startups with proven venture investment talent, company-building expertise, and capital.

[Link](#)

Houston Angel Network

The largest Angel Network in the state of Texas.

[Link](#)

A top-down view of a wooden desk. On the left, a silver laptop is open, with a person's hands typing on the keyboard. To the right of the laptop, a hand holds a white smartphone displaying a red screen with a white smiley face. The background is a warm, textured wooden surface.

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Online resources

Houston Start-ups List

A very convenient map of the local innovation Industry in Houston. It provides a list of the newest startups based in Houston, relevant events, coworking spaces and job advertisements.

[Link](#)

Angels Houston

A search engine to find start-ups, start-up jobs, investors, incubators and many more related items.

[Link](#)

InnovationMap

InnovationMap is the guide of innovation in Houston within startups, tech, health, energy, social impact, and more.

[Link](#)

Startup Houston

An online platform to get in touch with other start-ups and the possibility to discuss topics on a live chat.

[Link](#)

Visit Houston-Texas

A general and complete guide with useful information on Houston. From Fact and Figures, a description of the industries to events and things to do in Houston.

[Link](#)

Houston Business Journal

The Business Journals are newspapers that report on everything business in many cities, including the four major ones in Texas. They have great resources to read about the economic climate of each city, and their events calendar highlights many corporate and networking events.

[Link](#)

HTX Tech List

HTX TechList is the newest platform for in-depth information about Houston startups, investors, hubs, and corporations.

[Link](#)

Beyond business

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The [Greater Houston Partnership \(GHP\)](#) represents Houston's business interests and is an influential (membership-based) business network. The GHP is a great source of information on local trends and the economy when considering opening shop in the greater Houston area. The GHP partnered with Accenture to create a strategic plan for Houston to be an innovation city at a world-class level.

Houston is at the heart of the Dutch business support system in Texas. [The Netherlands-America Foundation Houston Chapter \(NAF\)](#), the [Netherlands Business Support Office](#) and one [Honorary Consul](#) are all based in Houston.



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business in Texas?

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