Downtown and the central core are the heartbeat of the city and the region.
Founded in 1983 by Downtown business leaders to ensure that the central city remains a vital and progressive place for commerce, culture and living, for more than 36 years the organization has conceived and implemented remarkable solutions for the complex challenges of our city. A booming Downtown is the soul of a great metropolitan area: Central Houston’s focus is long term and big picture.

Big Results

Over the past 15 years, Downtown has experienced what is arguably the greatest resurgence in the city’s history. Central Houston has fostered more than $9 billion of development across a broad mix of urban uses: new parks and public spaces, new and renovated hotels, new multi-family residential developments, new and renovated office towers, renovations and expansions to convention and theater facilities and continued investments in government facilities, infrastructure and transit. As a result, space management, operations and programming have become an even larger priority. Streetscape amenities such as lighting, banners and vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding systems as well as community programming and events are integral in creating a quality place to live, work and visit.

Quality of Place
Disruptive Leadership

With the long-term outlook as a principle focus, Central Houston coordinates and collaborates with public and private entities to ensure responses to issues and implementation of projects result in a stronger Downtown and central core.

This sense of vision has a proven track record, with notable assets in place across the Downtown Houston skyline and streetscape.

Leadership and unparalleled expertise are key reasons Central Houston has been able to move the needle and make permanent and positive change. Due to an extraordinarily high caliber and diverse board and membership, the organization is always looking for better solutions and isn’t afraid to shake things up to get the necessary results.

As we look to the future, Central Houston will continue its course, though it might not be the most obvious or easiest, striving to help elevate Houston further. Even with the great progress achieved over the past few decades, there’s much more that can be done to ensure that Houston stays competitive with other major urban areas, both in the US and across the globe. As those other cities continue to grow, evolve and improve, Houston must continue to make the strides it has over recent years.
The draw for our members is their deep commitment to the success and betterment of the central city.

**Workforce Attraction**

Simply put, there is no substitute for being a great place, and in a competitive workforce environment, this is essential for talent attraction and retention. People value safety, housing options, good schools and efficient transportation systems in addition to dining options, entertainment, arts and sports. Today’s employees want to live in interesting, inspiring and active places and people are increasingly choosing to give up cars and space in exchange for a lifestyle that offers a rich mix of amenities, shorter commutes and walkability. With education being one of the core building blocks for a healthy city, Central Houston has developed an education and awareness campaign called Learn Central which helps people find quality K-12 education options within Houston’s inner loop. In addition, Central Houston is proud to have helped Houston Independent School District secure the new Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts campus, which opened in Downtown to great fanfare in January of 2019.
Membership in Central Houston is an incredible way to unify the voice of business, institutional and community leaders, so we can have a powerful impact in moving Downtown and the central city in a positive direction. By joining Central Houston, you lend your support to advocacy efforts that benefit our overall economy, while staying informed on pertinent issues.

Central Houston members are some of the most influential people in the region. Membership covers the breadth of Houston’s business community, from one person start-ups to multi-national giants, small businesses and mid-market businesses, with not-for-profit organizations, foundations and governmental organizations all part of the diverse membership mix.

Central Houston remains strong because of our track record—built on credibility and momentum.

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The concept of an “innovation cluster” is essential to spurring innovative start-ups and established digital technology companies as well as attracting investors and top talent. Opportunities for collaboration and advancement result from the numerous collisions and points of friction that stem from having a critical mass of business start-ups and research in a single area. Central Houston’s long-term goal, along with the City of Houston and other organizations, is to establish Downtown as a vibrant, innovative center of gravity for technology and entrepreneurship in the northern node of the Houston Innovation Corridor. Strategically located within Houston, Downtown is uniquely positioned to take advantage of partnerships with our university system as well as leverage Downtown’s highly dense energy sector. In addition, and critical to a vital innovation ecosystem, Downtown encompasses the vibrant 24/7 urban lifestyle that company founders and employees desire.

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As a Central Houston member, we offer many ways for you to share ideas with other members of the Downtown community, including public officials, property owners, residents and retailers. Your involvement can range from serving on our board, participating in long-range planning sessions, forums and committees to networking and attending informational meetings.

It’s our members’ thoughts, vision and experiences that drive what we do. Join us to help find the answers and solutions to shape Houston’s future.
One of the fundamental differentiators between Central Houston and other organizations: we have the ability to get things done.

A strategic priority for Central Houston is improving and enhancing regional access and connectivity at all levels, giving workers, residents and visitors a variety of transportation alternatives that allow for the continuous growth of our city. One of Downtown’s strongest competitive advantages is its location at the center of Houston’s mobility network. The highway, transit, bike and greenway systems converge on Downtown’s street grid making it readily accessible from across the city and beyond.
Central Houston played an important role in the design and funding of the initial master plan for Buffalo Bayou and developed improvements from Sabine to Allen’s Landing. The organization initiated streetscape improvement plans and worked with the Metropolitan Transit Authority (METRO) on the development of multiple transit plans, following the 1983 referendum defeat.

Central Houston dedicated efforts to make Main Street Square, a pedestrian and transit hub at the epicenter of Downtown in coordination with the Main Street light rail project, and later, helped facilitate the development of Discovery Green and Market Square Park. Remarkably successful endeavors such as Minute Maid Park, Toyota Center and BBVA Compass Stadium all got their start with the assistance of Central Houston.

Central Houston also had the foresight for creating game-changing growth in the Convention District, now called Avenida Houston, by working with the Texas Legislature in 1993 to put incentives in place which helped to facilitate and fund convention hotels, such as the Hilton Americas and the Marriott Marquis, and also implemented a Downtown Living Initiative, with the partnership of the City of Houston, which has resulted in tripling Downtown’s residential population in just three years.

Today, as it has for more than three decades, Central Houston has kept its focus on the future of Houston, embracing Downtown and beyond. Strategic priorities include progressing projects such as the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for civic enhancements related to the North Houston Highway Improvement Project; building a robust innovation ecosystem as part of the city’s “innovation corridor”; advancing multi-modal accessibility; support of The Way Home campaign to end homelessness; and continuing to invest in the creation of an active, pedestrian-friendly Downtown that will entice new businesses, employees and residents to locate in the central city.

The organization actively seeks the ideas and voices of top business leaders and city officials to collectively visualize and facilitate the necessary factors that ensure these impactful ideas become a reality.

Live it Up
Downtown’s explosion of residential development is arguably the greatest shift to its urban core since the city began its renewal back in the mid 1990’s. Due to the success of the Downtown Living Initiative—a program which awards $15,000 per unit in tax rebates to developers who create homes or multi-family projects—Downtown’s residential population has tripled over the past few years and will continue to grow. What makes Downtown different from other areas of Houston is that it is the only place in the city where a resident has everything they need within walking distance. Not just bars and restaurants, theater, sports and award-winning parks, but medical, worship, fitness and transportation.

Making Ideas Happen

The thriving central core of Houston today is the result of Central Houston’s projects and efforts.
Accomplishments

The depth and breadth of the accomplishments realized over the past 36 plus years is due to the efforts of not only Central Houston but our many partners.

1980s
1983  Texas Special METRO Circulator
1984  Buffalo Bayou Sesquicentennial Park Design Competition
1985  Houston Police Department Mounted Patrol
1985  Trees for Downtown
1986  Buffalo Bayou Master Plan & Buffalo Bayou Partnership
1987  Banner Ordinance and Program
1987  Design Plan for Downtown
1987  Main Street Proud Street Program
1987  Creation of Theater District
1988  Successful METRO rail referendum
1988  Opening of Buffalo Bayou Park Sabina to Bagby
1989  Work to create Houston Downtown Management District— (resulted in Chapter 375 of the local government code)
1989  Opening of Phase I Buffalo Bayou Sesquicentennial Park

1990s
1990  Creation of Houston Downtown Management Corporation
1991  Creation of Houston Downtown Public Improvement District
1991  Downtown Police Center I-10 Ruins
1991  METRO Monorail urban design
1992  Houston Area Community Development Corp.
1993  Convention Center Hotel rebate legislation
1993  Houston Coliseum redevelopment RFP
1993  Convention Hotel RFP
1994  Gaming research
1994  Downtown Development Framework Plan
1994  Downtown Business Development Program
1995  Creation of Houston Downtown Management District
1995  Creation of TIRZ#3 Market Square for The Rice redevelopment
1996  Arena research & study
1996  Downtown ballpark planning & referendum
1997  Ground-breaking on ballpark
1997  Opening of Bayou Place
1998  Main Street Coalition formation
1998  Groundbreaking Downtown Transit Streets program
1998  Opening Phase II Buffalo Bayou Sesquicentennial Park
1999  Downtown arena development planning

2000s
2000  Opening of Minute Maid Park
2000  Successful Downtown arena referendum
2000  Main Street Light Rail planning and design
2001  Emergency Response Task Force
2001  Toyota Center groundbreaking
2002  Creation of Downtown Scenic District
2002  Main Street Square development
2003  Opening of expansion of George R. Brown Convention Center
2003  Opening of Hilton Americas Hotel
2003  Blueprint Houston formed
2004  Opening of Main Street Square and METRO light rail
2004  Super Bowl XXXVII
2004  MLB All Star Game
2004  Downtown Development Framework
2004  Blue Ribbon Commission on Homelessness formed
2004  Urban Collaborative Program
2005  Hurricane Housing Task Force planning support
2005  Discovery Green Conservancy formed
2005  Intown Living Task Force
2006  NBA All Star Game
2006  Dynamo Soccer Stadium location and preliminary studies
2006  Homeless Strategic Plan and Rapid Re-housing Initiative
2006  Urban Corridor Planning
2007  Downtown Sustainability initiative
2007  METRO Phase 2 LRT planning
2008  Access/Transportation Priorities Task Force
2008  Discovery Green opens
2008  Supportive Housing Task Force and plan
2009  Transit Corridors Ordinance adopted
2009  North & Southeast LRT corridors groundbreaking

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2010s

2010  Market Square Park re-opens
2011  NCAA Final Four
2011  HSPVA Downtown site designation
2011  George R. Brown Master Plan Update
2012  Downtown Living Initiative
2013  The Way Home Permanent Supportive Housing Initiative
2015  Learn Central Initiative
2015  Coordination of the I-45/I-10 planning by TxDOT
2013–2015  Plan Houston, participation in the process of creating a general plan for Houston
2015  Downtown Leadership Summit
2015  Formation of CHIME, young professional membership program of Central Houston
2017  Super Bowl LI
2017  Plan Downtown rollout
2019  Kinder HSPVA opens
2019  MassChallenge expands to Houston