SWEET
Vintage Styles

‘TIS the SEASON TO CELEBRATE TRENDS of the PAST

RAISING PARTICIPATION
Learn how to put the fun in fundraiser (pg. 30)
HOUSTON 2.0
H-Town stages a comeback. BY LAURIE L. DOVE

VENTURE TO THE CENTRAL REGION of the nation's fourth largest city and you'll find professional ballet, opera, symphony, theater companies, a Museum District with 18 cultural destinations, a 1,300-acre Memorial Park and a Wi-Fi-enabled Discovery Green outfitted with a playground, water features, public art and a 360-degree view of Houston's skyline.

In 2017, you'll find the Super Bowl, too, as the largest single game in American sports will be played at Houston's Reliant Stadium. "I can't tell you how excited I am for Houston to be selected," says Houston Texans owner Bob McNair. "This is a worldwide stage that will be constructed in Houston, and the world will be watching."

It's all part of a renaissance taking place in Houston that does, indeed, seem to have the world taking note.

This city, population 2.1 million, has long been known as the Energy Capital of the World because of its oil and gas production, but it's also earning a reputation as the Alternative Energy Capital of the World. In June 2013, the city purchased $2 million in renewable power making it the largest municipal renewable power buyer in the country.

Twenty-five Fortune 500 companies call Houston home. Aeronautic research still occurs at NASA headquarters, responsible for putting the first man on the moon, and Texas Medical Center remains the largest in the world, with 47 research and treatment institutions. This entrepreneurial spirit goes deep back to the city's founding in 1836 by two brothers from the East Coast—a shopkeeper and bookkeeper by trade—who befriended a man named Sam Houston as he was leading a military reclamation of the land that would become Texas.
The Tasty Side of Houston

Ask a native son or daughter to explain Houston's culinary scene, and they may very well tell you the city has more culturally diverse restaurants than anywhere else in the nation—and you can find them in foodie pockets all over the city.

James Beard Award-winning chef Tyson Cole opened the second location of his Austin-born Uchi in February 2012 in Montrose. The restaurant's menu focuses on sushi and sashimi, as well as sake, wine and beer.

Oxheart, operated by chef Justin Yu and Karen Man, opened in 2012 in Houston's Warehouse District and serves modern, casual fare. The year was a boon for foodies, as chef Chris Shepherd (formerly of Houston's Catalan) also opened the 180-seat Underbelly in Lower Westheimer, showcasing locally sourced food and diverse dishes. Sparrow Bar + Cookshop debuted under the tutelage of chef Monica Pope and features sharable plates such as lamb sweetbreads and chickpea fries.

The Tasting Room at Uptown Park was one of the first to pioneer the wine bar concept, and recently marked its 10th year in Houston. Billed as a "comfortable place to get serious about wine," there are now four Tasting Room locations across Houston pairing wines with chef-inspired gourmet foods, live music and private event spaces. The Uptown Park location is now a roomy 9,000-square-foot venue with an additional 4,000 square feet in patio space.

"We feel very fortunate that our concept has grown over the past 10 years, and we are thankful for our guests and patrons for their ongoing support," says Jerry Lasco, founder and CEO of Lasco Enterprises, the company behind the Tasting Room.

For Houston's own take on Texas creole, there's Brennan's of Houston. Located on the outskirts of downtown, this 46-year-old culinary landmark is a draw for special occasions, and meeting and convention attendees who frequently book the restaurant's private event...
A glimpse of Houston's GreenStreet project, which transformed a deteriorating downtown area into a pedestrian-friendly destination dotted with restaurants, retailers and entertainment venues.

GET CONNECTED

BRENNAN'S OF HOUSTON
brennanshouston.com
713.522.9711

GEORGE R. BROWN CONVENTION CENTER
houstonconventionctr.com
713.833.8000

GREATER HOUSTON CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU
visithoustontexas.com
713.437.5200

GREEN STREET
greenstreetdowntown.com
832.320.1201

OXHEART
oxhearthouston.com
832.830.8592

SPARRROW BAR + COCKTAIL
sparrrowhouston.com
713.524.6922

THE TASTING ROOM AT UPTOWN PARK
tastingroomwines.com
713.992.9800

UCHI
uchirestaurants.com
713.522.4808

UNDERBELLY
underbellyhouston.com
713.528.9800

spaces. "We're located in a historic building built by John Staub in the 1920s as the original home of the Junior League in Houston," says Alex Brennan-Martin, managing partner and third-generation owner, who began working in his family's restaurant when he was old enough to stand on a milk crate and cut the tops off strawberries.

Brennan's upper-level Garden Room accommodates up to 180 guests and can be divided into two or three rooms for smaller events. The space is a companion to Brennan's Wine Room for 32 guests, Courtyard Balcony for 28 guests, Solarium for 40 guests and Little Room for 17 guests, each of which overlook the restaurant's plant- and fountain-filled courtyard. These spaces can be combined to accommodate 270 guests.

You'll also find The Terms of Endearment Room, which accommodates 28 and overlooks the courtyard, and the Chef's Dining Room for 60. The courtyard itself is a favorite spot for special luncheons.

Meetings Make a Comeback

In 1845, Texas became the 28th state in the Union. By 1899, Houston had opened its first park, followed by the first Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in 1932 and the founding of Texas Medical Center in 1943. In 1969, "Houston" was one of first words spoken from the surface of the moon and by the 1970s and early 1980s, the city had become a hub for business travel. The addition of the George R. Brown Convention Center in 1987 was a boon to meetings and conventions, too.

"But as time went on, Houston didn't have a convention housing package that was competitive," says Greg Ortale, president and CEO of the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Busing and shuttle service had to be part of the convention package. The downtown area wasn't pedestrian-friendly. Our meetings slipped."

Now, thanks to a city-initiated incentive, there are several hotels conveniently close to the George R. Brown Convention Center—and an additional six properties with 2,000 rooms set to open by 2016. The addition of nearby Discovery Green, a 12-acre park outfitted with art carts, reading rooms, jogging and walking trails, a putting green, public art and a lake have drawn more foot traffic to the area. So has the GreenStreet project, which transformed a deteriorating downtown area into 570,000 square feet of restaurants, retailers and entertainment venues, along with visitor-friendly green space.

"We had good hotels, but we needed multiple hotel products," Ortale says. "This will put us in a whole new category. Our convention business is going to be quite solid. We're returning to the glory days of the 1970s and early '80s, when we were one of the top 10 convention destinations in the country."

"Houston is on its way back," Ortale says. "Big time."
Houston's Hotel Boom

BY 2016, HOUSTON'S CONVENTION CENTER will be surrounded by six new hotel properties. The increased number of hotel rooms, estimated to be about 2,000, will “give Houston the opportunity to host conventions that we couldn’t before, due to the lack of hotel inventory,” says Greg Ortale, president and CEO of the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau. “We can now compete for any piece of business. This city has so much to offer.”

ON THE HORIZON

MARRIOTT MARQUIS: Spring 2016
Rooms: 1,000
The Marriott Marquis, connected to the George R. Brown Convention Center, and the existing Hilton Americas Houston will bookend Discovery Green. A project of RDA Development Corp. and Houston First, the new Marriott will offer 100,000 square feet of meeting space.

HAMPTON INN/HOMEWOOD SUITES:
September 2015
Rooms: 300
Just two blocks from the George R. Brown Convention Center, American Liberty Hospitality is developing a dual-brand 14-story property. The two properties will have separate identities, including different exterior architectural styles, independent entrances and restaurants. Shared spaces include 6,000 square feet of meeting space.

HYATT PLACE: Summer 2015
Rooms: 261
This 11-story select-service hotel will include free breakfast and complimentary Internet, and is being constructed three blocks from the George R. Brown Convention Center.

JW MARRIOTT: Spring 2014
Rooms: 323
The 102-year-old Samuel F. Carter Building at 806 Main—seven blocks from the city's convention center—is being transformed into a 323-room JW Marriott by Pearl Hospitality. The $80.8 million project will include a full-service restaurant, bar, spa, health club, executive lounge and 10,000 square feet of meeting space.

SPRINGHILL SUITES: Mid-2015
Rooms: 166
The historic Humble Oil Building complex at Main Street and Dallas is seven blocks from the George R. Brown Convention Center and will now include a Springhill Suites. The complex is already home to a 191-room Courtyard and 171-room Residence Inn.

RECENTLY RENOVATED

HOTEL ICON: Renovated in 2012
Hotel Icon completed a $5 million renovation in 2012, including upgrades to the exterior, interior and guest rooms. The 135-room property, located inside the 1912 Union National Bank building, is now part of Marriott International's Autograph Collection. Hotel Icon's restaurant, Line & Lariat, opens onto Main Street. hotelicon.com

SAM HOUSTON HOTEL: Renovated in 2013
This 97-room boutique hotel opened in 1924, reopened in 2002 as the Aiden, and has gone back to its original name: the Sam Houston Hotel. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the property has 7,000 square feet of event space, including a rooftop veranda. The extensive renovation included guest rooms, meeting spaces, and the hotel's restaurant and bar. thesamhoustonhotel.com

LANCASTER HOTEL: Renovated in 2013
A $10 million renovation of the historic Lancaster Houston Hotel was completed this fall. The hotel made technology upgrades and also has a redesigned lobby, meeting spaces, guest rooms and suites. The family-owned Lancaster opened as the Auditorium Hotel in 1926 and reopened as the Lancaster in 1983. thelancaster.com

WESTIN HOUSTON DOWNTOWN: Renovated in 2013
The Inn at the Ballpark is now the Westin Houston Downtown. Located across the street from Minute Maid Park, the property’s renovations include updated furnishings and finishes throughout, and a brand new lobby and lobby bar. innatthebalpark.com