

# Driving Growth in Bay Area Houston

*A snapshot of regional initiatives and economic impact*



**18**  
Cities

**2**  
Counties

**1**  
Region

## Letter from the President



**Brian Freedman**

As we close out the first quarter of 2026, I am proud to reflect on what has been a fast-paced and productive few months for our region. From quality events to expanding partnerships, we continue to build on the momentum that makes the Bay Area Houston a true destination for innovation, technological advancement, and economic growth.

One of the standout moments this year so far was the Annual Quasar Award Banquet, where we had the honor of recognizing City of Houston Mayor John Whitmire for his exceptional leadership and contributions to the region. His dedication to the City of Houston makes this award well-deserved.

BAHEP also had the opportunity to once again co-host the annual ASCENDxTexas event, which is the largest space conference across the State of Texas and one of the largest in the country. This event brought together aerospace and business leaders, entrepreneurs, and visionaries from across the globe to discuss the future of manned space exploration.

Our community engagement efforts spanned numerous audiences this quarter included co-hosting the Challenger 40<sup>th</sup> Rememberance with the Challenger Center, participating in the La Porte Regional Roundtable Day, and hosting a 60-person delegation from Sweden.

Additionally, our first year of leading the Texas Aerospace Scholars program will come to a close in the next couple of months as the top students in the program finish their education with a week-long residency at the NASA Johnson Space Center this summer. We are thrilled to see several hundred students across the state pursue their passion for STEM and aerospace.

Looking ahead, our Citizens for Space Exploration Committee are gearing up for their annual trip to Washington D.C. in May to engage directly with federal and state lawmakers to advocate for policies that will help maintain and grow our leadership in space exploration.

Thank you for your support and let's continue working together to achieve more successes in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "BRIAN FREEDMAN". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Brian Freedman  
President

## General Membership Meetings & Events

### 2026 Annual Quasar Award Banquet

BAHEP hosted its 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Quasar Award Banquet on January 23 at the South Shore Harbour Resort and Conference Center in League City, Texas. City of Houston Mayor, John Whitmire, was selected by the organization to be this year's Quasar Award recipient for his bold leadership, transformative initiatives, fiscal responsibility, and infrastructure improvement projects. Nearly 600 members, partners, and community leaders attended the event, which featured vibrant decor inspired by Houston's diverse culture and the upcoming soccer festivities.



### BAHEP Annual State of the Economy

BAHEP's February General Membership Meeting featured an Annual State of the Economy update from Victoria Greene, Founder of G Squared Private Wealth, at Lakewood Yacht Club. Green provided an in-depth outlook on the economic and market landscape heading into 2026 - examining opportunities and risks in an environment increasingly shaped by advances in artificial intelligence. She also gave a detailed review of current market conditions, key economic indicators, and a Houston-area economic outlook highlighting regional trends and industry sectors of interest.



## Workforce Development



### Smart Manufacturing Roundtable

BAHEP hosted a Smart Manufacturing Roundtable Luncheon with the Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station (TEES). The event brought together industry, education, and government leaders to discuss advancing smart manufacturing in the region. Participants shared insights on workforce development, training, and technology adoption, helping BAHEP and TEES identify concrete ways to strengthen pipelines, upskill employees, and modernize manufacturing operations.

### TEES Manufacturing Summit

The Texas Defense Aerospace Manufacturing Community hosted their 2026 Summit at the Lone Star Flight Museum on March 16 and 17. The two-day event featured a multitude of panels and discussions focusing on manufacturing and the state of the industry. Brian Freedman spoke as a panelist for their State of the Ecosystem panel along with other economic development experts from across the state.



## NASA & Commercial Space Advocacy

### ASCENDxTexas Conference

BAHEP partnered with the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) for the fifth annual ASCENDxTexas conference held at the South Shore Harbour Resort. The two-day conference featured various keynote speakers and panels focused on strategy, development, and implementation of our off-world exploration, national security, and commercial activities. BAHEP President, Brian Freedman, moderated a panel titled Thriving in Exploration: Xpanding Aerospace Synergies (Texas Strategic Initiatives) with panelists Norman Garza, Jr., Executive Director of the Texas Space Commission, Gwen Griffin, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Texas Space Commission and Stephanie Murphy, Chair of the Executive Committee of the Texas Aerospace Research and Space Economy Consortium (TARSEC).



## Community Engagement

### Challenger 40<sup>th</sup> Remembrance



BAHEP was honored to co-host the Challenger 40th Remembrance: Honoring the Crew, Launching the Next Era event with the Challenger Center in the atrium this past January. The intimate evening featured a panel of speakers including Adam Higginbotham, Author of *Challenger*; Michael Lopez-Alegria, Chief Astronaut at Axiom Space; and Wayne Hale, former Space Shuttle Program Manager. The panel was moderated by Mike Kincaid, President of the Challenger Center.

### La Porte Regional Roundtable

BAHEP was thrilled to present at the the first Texas Downtown (TXD) Regional Roundtable of 2026 hosted by the City of La Porte on February 20. The event brought together community leaders, economic development professionals, and downtown champions from across Texas and beyond to highlight the revitalization of Main Street and explore resources available through regional collaboration.

Brian Freedman presented at the event and discussed regional economic development. SATOP Project Specialist, Marcela Barton provided a program overview of SATOP to the attendees.



### Swedish Delegation Visit

BAHEP hosted a delegation from Sweden on March 17 for a Round Table Discussion and Networking Lunch. Notable delegates in attendance were H.R.H. Crown Princess Victoria; H.E. Maria Malmer Stenergard, the Minister for Foreign Affairs; H.E. Urban Ahlin, the Ambassador of Sweden to the U.S.; H.E. Christine Toretta, the Ambassador of the U.S. to Sweden; and Anna Hammarlund Blixt, the Consul General of Sweden in Houston. The discussion focused on “Space as an Arena” and many aerospace BAHEP members attended including Barrios, Astrolab, Vast, Axiom Space, Cimmaron, and Leidos. Local government officials in attendance were Houston City Council Member Fred Flickinger, Jay Guerrero representing Senator Cornyn’s office, and Dr. Chara L. Bowie representing Harris County Precinct 2.



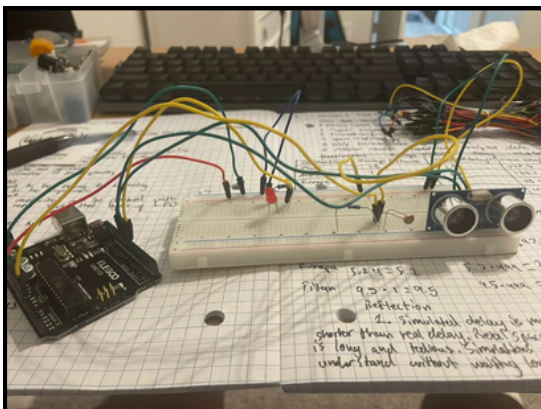
## Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program

The SATOP team stayed active this quarter, participating in key events including the SBA Manufacturing Workshop, the TechCon Southwest 2026 Conference, La Porte's Downtown Regional Roundtable, JSC SBC Conference, Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston's Small Business Series, and the SBA Houston District's Key Stakeholder Meeting.

For the first half of the State's fiscal year (Sept 1 - Feb 28), SATOP received 40 technical assistance requests and launched 11 new 40-hour projects, pairing entrepreneurs with University faculty and engineers from SATOP's Alliance Partners. Additionally, 23 Capstone projects are currently underway across six universities across the state.



## Texas Aerospace Scholars



Texas Aerospace Scholars are deep into their fourth mission of the school year, gearing up their final engineering challenge in early April. Over the past few months, they've studied introductory coding and computer aided design, researched crew life-support systems, and designed multitools fit for astronauts.

In March, students across Texas modelled deep-space communication as they designed microcontroller-powered relays to mimic how NASA sends signals across the solar system. Using light and distance sensors, they calculated communication delays between planets, programmed their device to simulate those delays, and tested their systems across a classroom-sized model of the solar system.

## Upcoming Events

### April

- April 1 - AAC Meeting & SBC Meeting
- April 2 - Team NASA Meeting
- April 6 - BAHEP Closed for Easter
- April 7 - MAC Meeting
- April 8 - PPC Meeting
- April 9 - Public Safety Meeting
- April 10 - Tourism Meeting
- April 14 - New Member Breakfast
- April 29 - April Membership Meeting

### May

- May 1 - Tourism Meeting
- May 6 - AAC Meeting & SBC Meeting
- May 7 - Team NASA
- May 13 - PPC Meeting
- May 14 - Public Safety Meeting
- May 18-21 - Citizens for Space Exploration Trip
- May 21 - IMAC Meeting & Education Meeting
- May 27 - Energy Meeting

### June

- June 3 - AAC Meeting & SBC Meeting
- June 4 - Team NASA Meeting
- June 5 - Tourism Meeting
- June 10 - PPC Meeting
- June 11 - Public Safety Meeting
- June 18 - IMAC Meeting & Education Meeting
- June 24 - Energy Meeting

For a complete list of events or for more information, please visit the calendar on our website at [bayareahouston.com](http://bayareahouston.com).

## Welcome New Members!



## Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership

The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership, BAHEP, is a member-driven organization that provides the leadership to stimulate regional economic development and employment. Utilizing a collaborative committee structure, we engage more than 320 investor companies, business professionals, local governments, and educational institutions in southeast Texas to bring about prosperity and a high quality of life for the 1.5 million people who live and work in the region. Our members include business partners, 18 member cities, Galveston County, Harris county, the Houston Airport System, and Port Houston.

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Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership sincerely thanks Harris County Precinct 2, Port Houston, the Houston Airport System, CenterPoint Energy, Southwest Airlines, and United Airlines for their continued support of BAHEP's work for the region.



Clear Lake Shores | Deer Park | Dickinson | El Lago Friendswood | Houston | Kemah  
La Marque | La Porte | League City | Morgan's Point | Nassau Bay | Pasadena  
Santa Fe | Seabrook | Texas City | Taylor Lake Village | Webster