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## JAPANESE FIRMS STRIKE IT BIG



Everything is looking up in Texas. Over the past decade, foreign multinationals and international investors have moved to the state, having found the right conditions to grow their businesses for many years to come.

A thriving workforce, expanding economic diversity, and increasing economic growth have made Texas one of the leading destinations for foreign direct investment in the United States, with the bulk of it coming from Japan.

In the last decade alone, the Texas Economic Development Corporation (TxEDC) reported a total of 119 investment projects, \$6.9 billion in capital investment, and 19,620 new jobs from Japanese companies in the state.

According to **Consul General of Japan in Houston Hirofumi Murabayashi**, the Texas-Japan relationship has reached an all-time high. From 2015 to 2020, the number of Japanese companies that have established offices in the state has climbed from 300 to 450, a level that was sustained even during the pandemic.

To further strengthen this economic partnership, the Office of the Texas Governor and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government signed in 2022 a Statement of Mutual Cooperation that affirmed their support for Tokyo-based small and midsize enterprises that want to expand to the Lone Star State.

**Texas Japan Office Director Hiroyuki Watanabe** said he was looking forward to the full implementation of the SMC now that business activity has returned to normalcy and international travel has resumed following delays brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A total of 18 Texas community partners have signed up to the SMC, including Frisco EDC, Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce, Plano Economic Development, the Dallas Regional Chamber, and GreaterSAX Regional Economic Partnership.

The SMC is also welcome news to organizations that create business and cultural connections between Japan and Texas.

"We can help Japanese businesses better understand Texas and the characteristics of its cities and industries. Texas is full of opportunities for everyone, including Japanese companies," said **JETRO Houston Chief Executive Director Masahiro Sakurachi**.

Meanwhile, **U.S.-Japan Council President Suzanne Basalla** highlighted the power of

personal connections in strengthening the partnership.

"The ties between the Japanese and American communities in Texas are growing at the foundational level because of genuine people-to-people connections. These relationships are powerful and precious, and can lead to great opportunities. They should not be taken for granted and must be continuously worked on," she said.

Houston-based lawyer **Kei Mari Ashizawa** hopes to see a larger and more dynamic Japanese presence that goes beyond business.

"I would like to see more Japanese families and companies in Texas. In particular, I would like to see more Japanese women integrated into their local communities. A greater sense of community creates better business opportunities, which in turn attracts more Japanese investments into Texas," she said.

For his part, **Japan-America Society of Dallas-Fort Worth President Harry Whalen** believes that Japanese businesses will find success in Texas because "the state is filled with genuine partners, such as economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, and other trusted organizations and collaborators that share their values no matter the sector."

That same optimism and confidence is found in the city of Garland, a fast-growing area in the northeast corner of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex.

"Japanese businesses have had and will continue to find success here in Texas. A lot of cities in Texas, like Garland, value diversity and collaboration above all else," said **City of Garland Economic Development Director Ayako Schuster**.

Meanwhile, amid the continuous growth in the global commercial aerospace sector, Houston wants to maintain its leading position. In 2021, Houston Airports broke ground at Ellington Airport for what it billed as "the world's first truly urban commercial spaceport" — Houston Spaceport.

"We'll need the best corporations from the U.S. and Japan working together to develop innovative programs and technologies that will push the aviation and aerospace industry

like never before and unlock untapped opportunities for everyone," said **HAS Director of Aviation Mario Diaz**.

In the energy sector, Texas remains the country's largest producer of oil and gas. Its proximity to the Gulf of Mexico has also given the Lone Star State abundant resources in natural gas, solar and wind power, which has unsurprisingly attracted Japanese energy companies.

"We are very proud to supply energy to the citizens globally, including the U.S. and Japan. We are committed to promoting natural gas as a form of 'transitional energy,' renewable energy and e-methane (a synthetic) as we actively push for innovative decarbonization strategies in line with our goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050," said **Osaka Gas USA President and CEO Sunao Okamoto**.

And in education and research, Texas continues to be the most popular choice for international students, including Japanese. As of 2022, its schools and universities attracted an average of 62,000 foreign students annually.

"Cultural exchange really matters. We want to make sure that our students and faculty can really grow and advance in their research and intercultural capabilities so they can create inclusive solutions to global challenges," said **University of Texas at Austin's Vice Provost for Global Engagement and Chief International Officer Sonia Feigenbaum**.

Cited often as the best example of a Japan-Texas partnership is the multinational convenience store chain 7-Eleven. Founded in Dallas in 1927, 7-Eleven sold a 70% stake to its Japanese franchisee in 1991. Today, 7-Eleven operates, franchises and licenses more than 78,000 stores in 19 countries in North America, Europe, Australia and Asia.

"Change equals opportunities. 7-Eleven in the U.S. did a great job at expanding the company nationally. But, it was our partners in Japan that introduced new practices that took the business to the next level. So, if I were to characterize the success of 7-Eleven in one word, it would be 'change,' which our partners in Japan have mastered," said **Jim Keyes**, a Dallas-based executive who was CEO of 7-Eleven and now spearheads a variety of tech initiatives.

## PLANO SHINES AS GLOBAL BUSINESS CENTER

Plano, the fourth-largest city in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, is proud of its global reputation as one of the best places to live and do business. This distinctive corporate environment has attracted more than 13,000 businesses and 67 Forbes Global 2000 companies, which include many globally recognized brands.

"Plano is a major employment center for one of the fastest-growing regions in the United States," said **Plano Director of Economic Development Doug McDonald**. He attributes this positive performance to the city's well-educated workforce, world-class real estate, outstanding transportation infrastructure, superior schools and a highly skilled business community.

"One of our major strengths is our diversity, which contributes to our strong sense of community," McDonald said. "We are an international community with more than 25% of our population born outside of the United States."

Plano is well-known as the City of Excellence, and is home to several Japanese multinationals, such as NTT Data Inc., Tokio Marine North America Inc., TDK-Lambda Americas Inc. and Toyota Motor North America Inc.

"More Japanese companies and families have located in Plano because of the exceptional quality of life and long-running relationships with the Japanese business community," McDonald added. "Plano is home to more than 30 Japanese companies. We are grateful to have a strong partnership with each of these companies, and consider it an honor to be a partner in their success."



The Boardwalk at Granite Park in Plano offers various dining options and an amazing waterfront view in a casual family-friendly atmosphere.

The number of Japanese companies thinking of expanding to Plano or other parts of Texas has been growing. McDonald wants those businesses to know that Plano will offer all the necessary support to ensure that they succeed. ■  
→ <https://www.planotexas.org>



## WELCOME HOME TO IRVING-LAS COLINAS, 'THE HEADQUARTERS OF HEADQUARTERS'

In the heart of the Dallas-Fort Worth area is Irving-Las Colinas, home to one of the largest master-planned business hubs in the United States. Irving-Las Colinas is known as the "Headquarters of Headquarters" because it has the largest number of Fortune 500 corporations per capita in Texas, according to the Dallas Business Journal.

"We have 10 Fortune 500 companies, 60 Fortune 1000 companies, and about 150 international corporations from Asia, Europe and Latin America, with Japanese companies having the most operations in our city," said **Vice President of International Affairs and Sister Cities with the Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce Joe Chapa**. Japanese multinationals include NEC, 7-Eleven, Ito En, Mitsui & Co., Honda and Hitachi.

Chapa expects more Japanese investors will be attracted to Irving-Las Colinas, a city with a population of about 260,000, due to the Statement of Mutual Cooperation signed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government and Texas Governor's Office last year. The SMC will help small and midsize enterprises based in Tokyo expand to Texas. Irving-Las Colinas is one of 18 community partners in the SMC.

"Irving-Las Colinas is a city built for business. We have worked hard to reduce the bureaucracy that companies often encounter when establishing a business," said Chapa, who added that the city's quality of life and amenities, such as golf and recreational facilities with access to world-class transportation and logistics infrastructure, are the reasons most often cited why companies "come home to Irving-Las Colinas."

International travelers find Irving-Las Colinas' convenient proximity to two major airports — Dallas Fort Worth International, the second-busiest airport in the world, and Dallas Love Field Airport — to be a major asset for the city.

The Greater Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce invites you to explore why the city's 10,000 businesses representing big and small companies and diverse industries call this city home. ■

→ <https://irvingchamber.com>



Irving-Las Colinas has built more than a dozen parks across the city center to support the perfect work-life balance.



### OPPORTUNITY IS KNOCKING

Irving, Texas, is built for business. Roughly 10,000 businesses call Irving-Las Colinas home, including fifty-four Fortune 500 companies. With low crime, great neighborhoods, and top schools, it's no wonder we are in the heart of one of the fastest-growing economies in the U.S.

This is your chance to grow! To learn more about working in Irving-Las Colinas, contact us at [economicdevelopment@irvingchamber.com](mailto:economicdevelopment@irvingchamber.com).

**IRVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP**

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Frisco is the global leader in maximizing human potential, supporting diverse industries and championing international brands. See what limitless potential looks like for your company.

## FRISCO: A CULTURE OF UNRIVALED PERFORMANCE

Given its location in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, Frisco has seen a steady stream of businesses and families relocating to the city, attracted by its enviable quality of life, world-class sports and leisure facilities, and an exceptionally business-friendly environment with ready access to a deep talent pool.

"Frisco is one of the fastest-growing cities in the U.S. In fact, we've been ranked No. 1 multiple times. Whether it is because of our prime location, safe and diverse community, or proactive business climate, companies from all over the world see value in being located in the city. We are not taking for granted any of the investments made here in Frisco," said **Harry Whalen, Frisco Economic Development Corp.'s Director of International Business Attraction**.

Aside from assisting companies in making relocation as smooth as possible, Whalen said the Frisco EDC also goes out of its way to ensure that new investors are well-positioned for success and to help them make the right choices for their business.

In the meantime, **Frisco EDC Vice President Gloria Salinas** singled out Frisco's economic resilience as another reason corporations, big and small, are drawn to the city.

"Frisco has been named as one of the most resilient and recession-proof cities in the United States. That only shows how strong and diverse our industries are," Salinas said,



Hall Park in Frisco is a major business center in North Dallas, providing more than 200,000 square meters of Class-A office space across a 65-hectare mixed-use development.

adding the city's pro-innovation and forward-thinking policies have convinced several companies from around the world, particularly Japan, to choose Frisco.

"Japan has been the Dallas-Fort Worth region's No. 1 international market for the past 10 years and that relationship continues to grow today. We are excited about all the future possibilities with Japan, not just in terms of investment, but also in cultural exchange and other forms of partnership. We look forward to partnering with Japan in making both our economies stronger," Salinas said.

Frisco is home to Toshiba Global Commerce Solution's Innovation and Incubation Hub. Two other Japanese companies are expected to announce operations in Frisco soon. ■  
→ <https://friscoedc.com>



# HOUSTON SPACEPORT: COLLABORATION CRUCIAL TO THE FUTURE OF COMMERCIAL SPACE TRAVEL

Collaboration, not competition. That was how **Houston Airport System Director of Aviation Mario Diaz** described the future of space exploration as he invited Japanese companies to take part in Houston Spaceport's long-term vision to become the leader in commercial space travel.

Widely considered to be the world's first truly urban commercial spaceport, **Houston Spaceport** offers unhampered access to a thriving aerospace community and world-class facilities, including vast corporate spaces, laboratories for large-scale space technology production and aerospace training institutions.

"This is a brand-new field we're exploring here — a commercial field. We want to work with Japan because together, we can lead the world when it comes to commercially driven aerospace programs. There's no single government, country or company that has the solution to everything. It's going to take all of us working together to enter the next level of space exploration," Diaz said.

"We can help Japanese companies that share our interest in progressing space exploration by lowering their costs and providing them with an environment that is rich in all the resources they need to be successful in moving the boundaries of human occupancy in space," he added.

Aside from the Houston Spaceport, HAS also oversees George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH), William P. Hobby Airport (HOU) and Ellington Airport, which is where the Houston Spaceport is co-located. HOU was the first airport in North America to receive a 5-Star rating in 2022 from the airline and airport review company Skytrax. In 2023, HOU maintained its 5-Star rating and continues to be the only airport in North America to boast this distinction. IAH meanwhile received a 4-Star rating for the sixth consecutive year.

Together, the three airports form one of the largest public airport systems in North America and give Houston a lead in becoming the global center for commercial space exploration. ■

→ <https://www.fly2houston.com>



## HOUSTON SPACEPORT

## UT AUSTIN GLOBAL INNOVATION LAB: TRAINING ENTREPRENEURS BY THE THOUSANDS

Already ranked as one of the 10 most influential public universities in the United States, the **University of Texas at Austin** has escalated its efforts to forge more and deeper connections around the world, a result of its determination to belong to a group of universities making the most significant impact on the future of the planet.

To achieve that objective, in 2001 UT Austin established the Global Innovation Lab, which has since carried out high-quality entrepreneurship training programs in 44 countries, created more than 15,000 jobs, and produced a global economic impact valued at around \$1.5 billion.

"The Global Innovation Lab is an integral part of 'Texas Global' at the University of Texas at Austin. Texas Global advances the mission of the university by promoting the research and work of our faculty and students globally, as GIL partners with governments, other universities and industries to train and support entrepreneurs in their local communities," explained **Sonia Feigenbaum, senior vice provost for global engagement and chief international officer**.

GIL formed a partnership with Aichi Prefecture to support entrepreneurs in the region and conducted a training program called Advancing Women and Youth Entrepreneurship, which was funded by the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. GIL designed the program to provide



UT AUSTIN

Nearly a century old, the UT Tower has become one of the most recognizable symbols of the city and the University of Texas in Austin.

young entrepreneurs with training, network-building and knowledge-sharing skills to grow their businesses. Top participants traveled to Texas to be introduced to mentors and venture capitalists in the Austin business community.

"We are honored and privileged to be working with numerous institutions and partners across Japan. We cherish these relationships and look forward to expanding the symbiosis between Japan and the state of Texas, specifically Austin, to address global challenges together," Feigenbaum said. ■

→ <https://global.utexas.edu/innovation-lab>

## BEXAR COUNTY AND GREATER: SATX – STRONG PARTNERS FOR SUCCESS



GREATER: SATX

Hosting more than a dozen Japanese multinationals, **Greater San Antonio** has proven to be an ideal location for foreign companies, like Toyota.

The **Greater San Antonio** region alone is home to around 1,700 Japanese and Japanese-American citizens and more than 12 Japanese multinational corporations, among them Futaba Industrial Co., Toyoda Gosei Texas LLC, and Toyotetsu Texas Inc. It also hosts Toyota's largest facility in North America (roughly 9.3 million sq. meters), which assembles the Tundra pickup and Sequoia SUV.

Attracting more than 39 million tourists every year, the Greater San Antonio region is one of Texas' top holiday destinations. But there is more to the region than its Spanish colonial cathedral and missions, its stunning parks and gardens and its world-class resorts and theme parks.

Located in Bexar County, the city of San Antonio is home to resilient and diverse industries, a strong labor force of 1.2 million, and first-class corporate and industrial facilities that give the region an abundance of business opportunities.

"San Antonio, and by extension Bexar County, serve as a fantastic platform for success. We want companies to see the value of doing business in our region. Aside from our geographical strength, which gives businesses easy access to both Mexico and the U.S., they will also be part of a hardworking and loyal community," said **Bexar County Economic and Community Development Executive Director David Marquez**.

Marquez hopes to see more Japanese companies move to San Antonio, particularly those in advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity, stressing that the region's business environment perfectly fits the criteria of Japanese businesses looking for a home in the U.S.

San Antonio's ties to Japan are long-standing and deep. Earlier this year, Peter Sakai, a second-generation Japanese American, was sworn in as the Bexar County judge. ■

→ <https://greatersatx.com>

→ <https://www.bexar.org/682/Economic-Community-Development>

## GARLAND: OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Located within the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, the city of **Garland** is attracting a lot of attention from businesses because of its diverse and highly skilled workforce, excellent quality of life, lower cost of living than neighboring areas, and strategic location.

"Garland is Texas' 12th-largest city and home to over 247,000 people. We're also less than 30 minutes away from both the Dallas/Fort Worth and Dallas Love Field airports. Combined with the fact that the city is currently undergoing a lot of redevelopment opportunities, the future of Garland is looking really exciting for both its citizens and businesses," said **Garland Economic Development Director Ayako Schuster**.

Garland's population is projected to double by 2050 and the city's current commercial and industrial vacancy rate is less than 2%, according to Schuster, who added that the city was expanding its residential, commercial and industrial capacity to meet the growing demand.

"Garland is a great city that can be your home, too. And I want to emphasize the word 'home.' We are a big city with a small-town charm. The community here in Garland respects



CITY OF GARLAND

**Garland Economic Development Director Ayako Schuster**

and welcomes all kinds of cultures. We have an ecosystem that actively helps one another and genuinely wants to see everyone succeed. Let's grow together," Schuster said. ■

→ <https://www.GarlandEDP.com>



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