



## NEW VISION FOR ASTRODOME PROPOSED TO COUNTY

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HOUSTON, TEXAS - - An alternative and visionary solution to the Reliant Astrodome's uncertain future has been presented to County Judge Ed Emmett and the Harris County Sports and Convention Corporation.

*ASTRODOME STUDIOS* – the new name tied to the future of Houston's and Texas' film and entertainment industry - is a concept that transforms the former stadium into a major sound stage and movie production studio with a minimal amount of reconstruction to the historic structure and with little conflict with current Reliant Park tenants, the Houston Texans and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Major studio productions and events would not be scheduled during Rodeo season and game times. In addition, museums within the studio are included in the plan; one to showcase the Astrodome's history, including the Rodeo's illustrious history. The second museum will archive Texas' 80-plus years of filmmaking and broadcast history and those Texans who have contributed to the moving image industry both in front of and behind the camera.

“Ambassador to the Astrodome” Dene Hofheinz Anton, daughter of the Astrodome's creator, Judge Roy Hofheinz, is "thrilled with this idea" and feels that it could be quite cost-effective. “This plan could free up and control scheduling so as to accommodate the needs of our wonderful Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo and The Texans. The fans would have easy access to and from all their great events. My priority is the preservation of The Astrodome, our historic landmark: The First of a Kind. As important to me is that we come-together in

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unison with our Rodeo and The Texans in a way that will make all citizens of Harris County proud and pleased. The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo has been a large part of The Astrodomain's History. We are all family for generations now. This (studio) could certainly be a win-win.”

Behind this project is the Greater Houston Global Management Group (GHGMG), a privately owned Limited Liability Company. In early 2008, GHGMG filed with the State of Texas to create a large-scale film and event production facility in Houston. GHGMG believes the Astrodome is a better-than-perfect location for such a major sound stage and studio. Irvine Team, a global design and construction strategy company responsible for significant conversions such as the former Compaq Center into Lakewood Church, has been brought on to lead design and construction efforts for GHGMG.

Already, a television station, a production company, and a talent agency plan to become Astrodome Studios first tenants should the project be approved by the County. The president of Houston Community College NW has also endorsed the concept. Students who graduate from the College's audio/film school will find internships and potential employment at Astrodome Studios.

Throughout the history of American movie-making, Texas has played a crucial role for the “magic makers” of the big and small screen. Many historic and hallmark films have been shot in the Lone Star State, including the first *ever* winner of an Academy Award® for Best Picture, the 1927 epic “*Wings*”. The industry has been good for Texas, employing an estimated 50,000 professionals<sup>1</sup>, and can continue to have a long-term economic impact with the addition of a large-scale production facility.

But since the mid-90's, Texas has steadily been losing major film and television projects to states that have been aggressive in offering financial incentives to producers. An example is Louisiana's near non-existent industry that swelled from a statewide budget of \$10.5 million in 2002 to a whopping \$748 million in 2005. In-state film industry payroll figures rose from \$75 *thousand* to \$78 *million* over that period. A significant number of Texas-based companies and technicians have migrated to Louisiana and other states in pursuit of employment with the production companies on location there.

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Film Commission, Office of the Governor

Recently the State of Texas began crafting together legislation authorizing an increase in financial and tax-relief incentives to studios and producers in hopes that it will influence their decision on Texas as a location for their next project. The one crown jewel that can significantly influence their choices would be the availability to lease a large state-of-the art production studio complete with all the needed technicians and crafts people. Because of the costs to a major production, having financial incentives provided, along with necessary filming locations and studio facilities close by, would go a long way toward increasing the number of projects done in Texas.

Astrodome Studios will help revitalize the state's film and video industry and put thousands of people to work, becoming the center of commerce for the entertainment and media industries in the State of Texas. Parent company GHGMG is seeking film, video, and broadcast-related tenants for the estimated 600,000 square feet of office and studio space that will be available in the building's periphery, formerly the concourse areas of the Dome. The enormous ball field, left intact, will ultimately become the sound stage and event area. Interested companies should contact Elise Hendrix, (337) 255-2414, [elise@astrodomestudios.com](mailto:elise@astrodomestudios.com) or Cynthia Neely, (713) 562-1483, [cynthia@astrodomestudios.com](mailto:cynthia@astrodomestudios.com).

Once the Astrodome is brought up to code with upgraded utilities, it can be put to use almost immediately. Motion picture production, whether for feature films, commercials, television programs, or music or corporate videos, can commence in this environmentally controlled super-structure. Shooting can take place 24-7, which is important to an industry where every hour of production can make or break a budget.

Other benefits to having a vibrant film and entertainment industry return to Texas would be the press coverage for such events. National and international coverage would put Houston and Texas into a positive spotlight. Public and tourist interest would support the museums, and educators would want to have their programs be part of the commerce generated by the production activity. Companies located inside Astrodome Studios would likely grow and want to be a part of the awareness generated by the publicity.

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