

# Houston, We Have a Problem: Space City Regulations Prevent Entrepreneurs From Taking Off (Institute for Justice City Studies)



Houston is one of Americas great cities. With a population of more than 2.1 million, it is the fourth-largest city in the nation. Houston is also a gateway for immigrants from around the world, with 28 percent of the citys population born outside of the United States. Houston has a proud tradition of fostering entrepreneurship. Indeed, when you compare the citys record to the abysmal standard being set by other cities around the nation, Houston does a respectable job of protecting entrepreneurship and economic liberty. The city has enacted few of the most ruinous ordinances that undermine entrepreneurs in other municipalities. For example, Houston does not have a zoning ordinance and has no general business license. The city does not regulate landscapers, handymen, beauty services or moving companies. It does not regulate home-based businesses any differently than other businesses. The citys private transportation regulations are not perfect (taxicab licenses are artificially limited), but they are much less burdensome than regulations in other cities (new licenses are meted out, by lottery, every three to four years). Another thing Houston does right is it provides would-be entrepreneurs with a lot of easily accessible information, including business start-up classes. As a result, Houstons economy is booming. In 1960, the city had just one Fortune 500 company; in 2008, the Houston area boasted 23 (only New York City is home to more Fortune 500 headquarters). In 2006, only 22 countries had a gross domestic product greater than Houstons gross regional product. That same year, Houston ranked second in employment growth among the 10 most populous metropolitan areas in the United States and Forbes named the city the third Best Place for Business and Careers in the United States. The city is a national leader in the energy, technology and aeronautics industries. Houston is undoubtedly an

opportunity city, but for whom? For more information, visit [www.ij.org](http://www.ij.org).

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