



## Houston 2026 Unveils Massive “Gateway To The World” Mural to Celebrate World Cup Bid and Spirit of Houston

**HOUSTON (October 13, 2021)** – As part of the launch of the Spirit of Houston, the Houston 2026 Bid Committee today revealed a 10,000 square foot “Gateway to the World” Mural at William P. Hobby Airport (HOU) that brings Houston’s unique spirit to life and celebrates the city’s bid to host the most popular sporting event in the world.

The mural, commissioned in collaboration with Houston Airports and the City of Houston, further harnesses Houston’s spirit of innovation and diversity with a creative approach to legacy. The colorful work of art features iconic Houston imagery such as the Astrodome and skyline, as well as two large soccer balls that highlight Houston’s passion for the game.

The whopping 20-by-500-foot mural was painted by prominent street artist Mario Figueroa Jr., artistically known as GONZO247, and six additional local artists – [Sylvia Blanco](#), [Hannah Bull](#), [Roni Cabrera-Moreno](#), [Black Cassidy](#), [Nicky Davis](#) and [Mathieu Jeanbaptiste](#).

Houston 2026 President Chris Canetti said: “The ‘Gateway to the World’ mural is yet another example of how Houston 2026 enjoys full support from public, private and civic institutions in its bid to host matches for the FIFA 2026 World Cup. The Houston community is rallying together to deliver future-focused initiatives in support of the city’s bid to host the most popular sporting event in the world. As hundreds of thousands of passengers travel through Houston Hobby Airport, they will get to experience the Spirit of Houston.”

Houston’s world-renowned airport system is a key component to the city’s World Cup bid and recently received high honors from [Skytrax World Airport Awards](#). Houston was the only U.S. city to have two airports in the Best Airports in North America and Cleanest Airports categories. The city’s vast transportation network and airports together service 55 million passengers, including over 10 million international travelers annually, providing the perfect hub to welcome, fans, players and visitors from all over for a truly global celebration of soccer.

Houston Airports Director Mario Diaz said: “There are no better airports than Houston’s to receive hundreds of thousands of passengers who will travel from every corner of the globe to witness the world’s most exciting soccer tournament. To see the Houston Airports coordinate this impressive mural project and participate in the Art of Soccer campaign, displaying soccer balls in both Bush and Hobby, is evidence of the airport’s unified support for Houston’s bid.”

The Spirit of Houston has already brought several programs to life. The reveal of the mural comes on the heels of Houston 2026's Grow the Game initiative, which has secured funding and launched two grassroots soccer programs in the region. Houston 2026 also recently announced a partnership with the U.S. Soccer Foundation that will serve as a catalyst for the significant growth of the game and create lasting legacies that will benefit generations to come through soccer.

### **About the Houston 2026 World Cup Bid Committee**

The Houston 2026 World Cup Bid Committee is leading the South Texas region's efforts to host the FIFA World Cup 2026™. It is a subsidiary of the Harris County – Houston Sports Authority. The FIFA World Cup 2026™ will be played in 16 cities across the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Houston is among 17 cities vying to become a U.S. host city. A final decision is expected in the first half of 2022.

### **About Houston Airport System**

Houston Airports is the City of Houston's Department of Aviation. Comprised of George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH), William P. Hobby Airport (HOU) and Ellington Airport (EFD) / Houston Spaceport, Houston Airports served nearly 25 million passengers in 2020 and nearly 60 million passengers in 2019.

Houston Airports forms one of North America's largest public airport systems and positions Houston as the international passenger and cargo gateway to the South-Central United States and as a primary gateway to Latin America.

Houston is proud to be the only city in the Western Hemisphere with two Skytrax rated 4-star airports. For more information about Houston Airports, please visit <http://www.fly2houston.com/>

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