

# Greater Louisville Inc. names new president, CEO

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COURTESY | GLI

Craig Richard has been named the new president and CEO of Greater Louisville Inc., the metro chamber of commerce.

The new president and CEO of **Greater Louisville Inc.** has more than 16 years of economic development and chamber leadership experience, much of it in his home state of Texas.

[Craig J. Richard](#), chief economic development officer of the **Greater Houston Partnership**, will take the top post at the metro chamber of commerce on Jan. 7.

He replaces [Joe Reagan](#), who left in January to lead the St. Louis Regional Chamber & Growth Association.

Richard, 48, has held his current position with the Greater Houston Partnership since 2008. The partnership, which traces its roots to Houston's original chamber of commerce, founded in 1840, has a mission similar to

GLI's.

The organization facilitates relocations and expansions in the 10-county Houston region, coordinates international outreach initiatives, receives foreign trade delegations and handles strategic planning.

It was established in 1989, when the Houston Chamber of Commerce, the Houston Economic Development Council and the Houston World Trade Association merged.

*Louisville's diverse economic base helped lure new GLI chief*

Richard said in a Thursday interview that all he knew about Louisville prior to interviewing for the GLI post was that it is home to the Kentucky Derby and Valhalla Golf Club.

“But those two things alone are some things that will make your head spin,” he joked.

Houston is Richard’s hometown, and he said he will miss Texas. But Louisville won him over because it is at the “intersection in America, where you get the best of all worlds.”

He added that the city has a strong and diverse economic base.

And he said the GLI post seemed a good fit and part of a natural career progression.

Richard said he is not yet familiar enough with Louisville to discuss its challenges, but they don’t really concern him.

“Every community has challenges,” he said.

#### *New CEO chosen from three finalists*

[Jeff Bringardner](#), Humana Inc.’s Kentucky market president and chairman of GLI’s board of directors, said Richard was selected after an “exhaustive” search process led by Greensboro, N.C.-based Jorgenson Consulting Inc.

Local and national candidates were considered, according to Bringardner, who also was chairman of the GLI search committee. Eight or nine candidates were interviewed, he said, and there were three finalists.

Bringardner led a search committee composed of a cross-section of business and community leaders. He said candidates were vetted by the committee and that the search process included input from other prominent leaders and GLI stakeholders and members.

Richard was the unanimous choice of the committee, Bringardner said. Members were impressed with his background, communication skills and relaxed demeanor.

“He’s a very affable gentleman,” Bringardner said. “He’s very personable. He’ll fit in very well here.”

#### *Recruitment firm contacted Richard*

Richard has held positions with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and the Greater Dallas and Arlington, Texas, chambers of commerce.

He holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Houston and a master’s degree in urban and regional planning from Virginia Commonwealth University, where he met his wife, Verna. The couple has two young sons.

Richard said his boys are looking forward to coming here so they can follow University of Louisville football and basketball.

Richard said he was happy in Houston and not pursuing any jobs when he was contacted by the Jorgenson search firm.

As he met people in Louisville during the interview process, “the chemistry between me and the community was undeniable,” he said.

Louisville Mayor [Greg Fischer](#) said Thursday that Richard is a good choice for the GLI position because he’s coming here from a bigger city and brings a new perspective.

He added that the incoming GLI chief has extensive experience working with entrepreneurs and angel investors and in attracting big businesses.

“He’s a very easy person to like,” Fischer said.

### *Changes at economic development agencies*

Richard’s appointment marks the second major leadership change at an area economic development agency this year.

In August, [Wendy Dant Chesser](#) was named president and CEO of One Southern Indiana, the chamber and development agency for Clark and Floyd counties.

She replaced [Jody Wassmer](#), who resigned in February after leading the organization for only four months.

The Bullitt County Economic Development Authority currently is seeking a replacement for its executive director, [Bob Fouts](#). He left the agency Nov. 1.

Business First staff writer Kevin Eigelbach contributed to this report.



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