

Notes



LIVABLE CENTERS

ELEMENTS OF PLACEMAKING
BEYOND AESTHETICS

Thursday, September 14, 2023

9 a.m. — noon



Agenda

Jose Cantu and Sarai Osorio, H-GAC

What is Placemaking?

9:00 a.m. — 9:10 a.m.

Jason O'Mara, City of Angleton

City of Angleton's Gateway Signage Master Plan

9:10 a.m. — 9:40 a.m.

Veronica Chapa Gorczynski, East End District

The Esplanade at Navigation

9:40 a.m. — 10:10 a.m.

Eileen Egan and Wayne Norden, Near Northwest Management District

Placemaking and Crime Prevention

10:10 a.m. — 10:40 a.m.

Agenda

Break

10:40 a.m. — 10:50 a.m.

Veronica Sanches and Selina Valdez, East Aldine District

Placemaking and Community Services

10:50 a.m. — 11:20 a.m.

Amna Ansari and Marcus Martinez, UltraBarrio

Impacts of Placemaking, Beyond Aesthetics

11:20 a.m. — 11:50 a.m.

Closing Remarks

11:50 a.m. — Noon

Meet our Speakers



Sarai Osorio, Principal Planner, Houston-Galveston Area Council

Sarai has joined the Houston-Galveston Area Council's Community and Environmental Planning Department as a Principal Planner. She will focus on strategic planning for the H-GAC Livable Centers Program, and will be leading the upcoming call for project sponsors.

Before joining H-GAC, Sarai was a Planner with a transportation planning & engineering consulting firm working on over 25 projects across the Southern California region ranging from Transportation Plans to Pedestrian Plans, Local Roadway Safety Plans, Active Transportation Plans, Tactical Urbanism Demonstrations, and Multi-Modal initiatives. For over five years, she has worn many hats throughout her career, from data analytics, research, technical writing, and visual communications. She uses her community outreach skills, facilitation skills, graphic visualization skills, and fluency in Spanish to guide the development of various project types meant to serve vulnerable and underserved populations. Sarai received her master's degree in Urban Planning with a concentration in Urban Design from Harvard's Graduate School of Design, and she received her bachelor's degree in Sociology and Urban and Regional Studies from University of California, Los Angeles.

Meet our Speakers



Jose Cantu, Planner, Houston-Galveston Area Council

Jose is a Planner within the Community & Environmental Planning department at the Houston-Galveston Area Council. Jose has served as the main point of contact for the Livable Centers Program for over a year now and is responsible for coordinating

H-GAC's Missing Middle Housing Peer-Exchanges. He has served as Project Manager for seven Livable Centers studies, one of which was recognized by the American Planning Association for, "Advancing Equity and Inclusion" and has hosted two Missing Middle Housing peer exchanges.

Before joining H-GAC in 2022, he worked with a local private developer where he helped plan the development of affordable infill housing in Kansas City, Missouri. Jose holds a Bachelor's in Urban Planning and Design from the University of Missouri – Kansas City.

When not working, Jose enjoys fishing the many bayous, rivers, lakes, and shores across the Houston Region.

Meet our Speakers



Jason O'Mara, Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation, City of Angleton

Jason O'Mara has been the Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation for the City of Angleton since May 2022, helping to oversee 11 parks and one

recreation center. Additionally, he serves as the Executive Director of Keep Angleton Beautiful.

After graduating from Stephen F. Austin with a Masters in Kinesiology, Jason began his professional career at the Niagara University overseeing the fitness program before moving back to Texas to work for the City of Pearland. In 11 years working for Pearland, Jason held various positions gaining experience in fitness management, sponsorships, non-profit board development, and recreation facility management. Through this development and passion to serve others, Jason transitioned to his current position as Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation in Angleton.

Jason and his wife, Rachel, have been married 13 years and have two girls, age 10 and 4. They enjoy spending time as a family, going on new adventures and relaxing in the outdoors.

Meet our Speakers



Veronica Chapa Gorczyński, President, East End District

East End District's services include public safety programs, an award-winning graffiti abatement program, maintenance of major thoroughfares, and disposal of illegally dumped trash.

The District's grant-funded capital program focuses on connecting neighborhoods and business to transit and resulted in \$31 million in improvements through 2017, with an additional \$45 million in new investments pending during her tenure.

A native of the Rio Grande Valley, educational and job opportunities have taken Veronica to live in San Antonio, New Orleans, Washington DC, Austin, and now Houston. She has worked in government, non-profit organizations, and education efforts—always focusing on ways to help the community gain resources and investment.

She pursued her undergraduate education at Saint Mary's University and University of Texas at San Antonio and obtained both a Master of Science in Community and Regional Planning and a Master of Liberal Arts in Latin American Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. A breast cancer survivor, Veronica is passionate about politics, good wine, and Texas barbeque. When not working, she enjoys volunteering on projects aimed at improving community engagement and spending time with her husband John and young son, Diego.

Meet our Speakers



Eileen Egan, Vice President, Near Northwest Management District

Eileen Egan is Vice President for Capital Projects at the Near Northwest Management District (NNMD). She has worked at NNMD since 2010. Eileen has managed a number of community projects including: design and

installation of monument markers, a mini murals program, and sidewalk installation and improvement projects.

Eileen has also managed several community events like: the largest National Night Out in the area, several District task forces, quarterly networking events, and an annual development/investment recognition event.

She has been active in several community planning activities, including the NNMD Livable Centers Study, the Northwest Regional Mobility Study, Houston Grocery Access Task Force, and others. She serves on the Mayor's Go Healthy Houston Task Force, the UT Physicians - Victory Community Advisory Board and the Acres Home Complete Communities Neighborhood Support Team.

Eileen holds a BS in Psychology from the University of Houston.

Meet our Speakers



Wayne Norden, President, Near Northwest Management District

Wayne has served as President of the Near Northwest Management District since 2009. He is one of the founders of the District, serving as Board Chair from 2001 – 2009.

As a long-time resident of Inwood Forest, he saw the need for an organization to address public safety, economic development and area perception in order to stem decline by improving mobility and safety.

Wayne has a long career in non-profit management and fund-raising.

Meet our Speakers



**Veronica Sanches,
Director of Operations,
East Aldine District**

Veronica joined the East Aldine District as the Assistant Director of Services in September of 2015. She has been a resident of Aldine for all her life and is an alumni of MacArthur Senior High School.

Veronica graduated from Lone Star College – North Harris with an Associates of Arts Degree, and then went on to earn a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice from Sam Houston State University.

Prior to joining the district, Veronica served as the Administrative Assistant for the Office of Emergency Management at Lone Star College for six years and attained certification under Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service TEEX, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Homeland Security, and National Incident Management System. She is also a certified Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) member.

After serving as Director of Services since 2017, she now manages the day-to-day operations of the district as the Operations Manager. In this role, she is also responsible for operations of the district’s 3-story - 30,000 sq./ft. multi-service building, 62-acre Town Center complex, including a park and amphitheater and recreational greenspace, as well as preparing and managing the district’s current \$12 Million annual budget.

Meet our Speakers



**Selina Valdez,
Recycling Coordinator,
East Aldine District**

Selina is the first Recycling Coordinator for the East Aldine Neighborhood Depository and Recycling Center. The idea of a Recycling Center was created by the Board of Directors of the East Aldine

Management District, and she was chosen to turn that idea into a reality. Selina was instrumental in connecting the recycling vendors to the management district and overseeing the contract negotiations to the satisfaction of all parties. As the coordinator, she is responsible for hiring and training staff while creating a work environment that promotes safety, best customer service practices, and encourages life-work balance.

Selina’s leadership style was shaped by her vast work experience, including a stint in the United States Marine Corps, working as a Human Resources Safety Officer in Paris, Texas. She received her Bachelor of Business Administration from Southern Methodist University in Dallas. Prior to working at the Recycling Center, she served as a Community Relations Liaison for Harris County Commissioner Precinct 2. She is an avid community advocate and was born and raised in East Aldine on the Northeast side of Houston. Her commitment to her community continues as she is currently serving as the Performing Arts Liaison for the East Aldine Arts Council and as the President of the Green Forest Civic Club, the longest active civic club in East Aldine.

Meet our Speakers



Amna Ansari, Partner, UltraBarrio

Amna applies her 20 years of global expertise in natural and built systems as a Partner at UltraBarrio. She strategically aligns infrastructure, urbanism, landscape, and technologies towards socially vibrant, equitable and enduring spaces. Her award-winning planning projects span cultural, ecological, and economical vital goals that are rooted in methodical engagement of public and city officials. Her talks - “Eco-Altitude”, “Covert Landscapes” and “Flight, Flows and New Fields” anticipate overlaps of public space with technology as placemaking tools. She’s been an invited speaker with the Boston Society of Architects as a panelist for “Smart Cities”, and as a speaker on the future of commercial space flight among a select number of leaders in NASA and Houston Area Aviation.

Amna received her Master’s in Architecture and Urbanism from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and she has been recognized through exhibitions in Washington DC, Rome, Milan, and Boston. As a designer who has lived and worked in Shanghai, Vienna, Boston, and today Houston, her portfolio of architecture and planning projects has contributed to numerous American Institute of Architects (AIA) and American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) design awards. Amna is a Visiting Critic at Rice School of Architecture. She has taught graduate and undergraduate architecture studios in Boston and Houston and looks forward to bringing her research into teaching.

Meet our Speakers



Marcus Martinez, Partner UltraBarrio

Marcus is a Partner at UltraBarrio where he is dedicated to topics that foster resilient communities, repurposing infrastructure, and building types that relate to cycles of scarcity, surplus, and obsolescence. His lens on these cycles was shaped as a collaborator focusing on mobility at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab Changing Places group. His efforts there translated into numerous urban core projects in Boston, including the 2024 Olympic Plan – smart city blueprint. His work in established communities like the East End, Near Northside are immersed in culture, legacy, and site performance.

He has received numerous awards, including the preservation award for the Ironworks in the East End, the repurposed Houston freeway – The Pierce Skypark, and state and local American Institute of Architects (AIA) awards for his design and engagement work in Gulfton. Marcus received his Master’s in Architecture and Urbanism from MIT, and has been a thesis instructor at Boston Architectural College, held academic appointments at MIT, and today is a lecturer and studio instructor at the University Houston. He has been an invited critic at Rice University, Wentworth Institute, University of British Columbia School of Architecture + Landscape Architecture, and University of Colorado Denver.

Active Transportation Funding Sources

National Highway Performance Program (NHPP)

The NHPP provides support for the condition and performance of the National Highway System (NHS), for the construction of new facilities on the NHS, and to ensure that investments of Federal-aid funds in highway construction are directed to support progress toward the achievement of performance targets established in a State's asset management plan for the NHS.

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/specialfunding/nhpp/>

Contact: Vishu Lingala (H-GAC) 713-993-4561
Vishu.Lingala@h-gac.com

Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)

The Surface Transportation Block Grant program (STBG) provides flexible funding that may be used by States and localities for projects to preserve and improve the conditions and performance on any Federal-aid highway, bridge and tunnel projects on any public road, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and transit capital projects, including intercity bus terminals.

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/specialfunding/stp/>

<https://www.txdot.gov/government/programs/stips/info/highway-funding.html>

Contact: Ana Ramirez-Huerta (TxDOT) Ana.Ramirez@txdot.gov
Vishu Lingala (H-GAC) 713-993-4561 Vishu.Lingala@h-gac.com

Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School is a national program that encourages walking and biking to school for grades K-8 through funding infrastructure improvements, enforcements, tools, safety education, and other incentives.

<http://www.h-gac.com/safe-routes-to-school/default.aspx>

Contact: Michelle Canton (H-GAC) 713-499-7000
Michelle.Canton@h-gac.com

Ana Ramirez-Huerta (TxDOT) Ana.Ramirez@txdot.gov

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program provides funds to States for transportation projects designed to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality, particularly in areas of the country that do not attain national air quality standards.

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/factsheets/cmaqfs.cfm>

Contact: Vishu Lingala (H-GAC) 713-993-4561
Vishu.Lingala@h-gac.com

CMAQ Commuter and Transit Pilot Program

Funding focused on finding first mile/last mile implementation solutions.

Contact: Alan Rodenstein (H-GAC) 713-993-2407
Alan.Rodenstein@h-gac.com

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Bus and Bus Facilities

Formula Grants (5339)

Provides funding to states and transit agencies through a statutory formula to replace, rehabilitate and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities.

Note: Requires a project sponsor from a transit agency.

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/busprogram>

Contact: Albert Lyne (METRO) 713-739-4697

al21@ridemetro.org

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

The CDBG entitlement program allocates annual grants to larger cities and urban counties to develop viable communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and opportunities to expand economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate- income persons. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are eligible uses of these funds.

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment

Contact: Stacia L. Johnson (HUD) (713) 718-3279

PeopleForBikes

Who Can Apply

PeopleForBikes accepts grant applications from non-profit organizations with a focus on bicycling, active transportation, or community development, from city or county agencies or departments, and from state or federal agencies working locally. PeopleForBikes only funds projects in the United States. Requests must support a specific project or program; they do not grant funds for general operating costs.

What They Fund

PeopleForBikes focuses most grant funds on bicycle infrastructure projects such as:

- Bike paths, lanes, trails, and bridges
- BMX bike parks and pump tracks
- End-of-trip facilities such as bike racks, bike parking, and bike repair stations.

They also fund some advocacy projects, such as:

- Programs that transform city streets, such as Ciclovías or Open Streets Days.
- Campaigns to increase the investment in bicycle infrastructure .

PeopleForBikes will fund engineering and design work, construction costs including materials, labor, and equipment rental, and reasonable volunteer support costs. For advocacy projects, we will fund staffing that is directly related to accomplishing the goals of the initiative.

PeopleForBikes accepts requests for funding of up to \$10,000. They do not require a specific percentage match, but we do look at leverage and funding partnerships very carefully. They will not consider grant requests in which their funding would amount to 50% or more of the project budget.

PeopleForBikes generally holds 1-2 open grant cycles every year. In an effort to green the grants process, they have moved to an online grant application system : <https://peopleforbikes.org/grant-guidelines/>

Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) aims to achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious accidents through the implementation of infrastructure-related highway safety improvements on all public roads, including non-State-owned roads and roads on tribal land.

<https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/hsip/>

Contact: Ugonna Ughanze (TxDOT) 713-802-5171
ugonna.ughanze@txdot.gov

Infrastructure for Rebuilding America Discretionary Grant Program (INFRA)

INFRA discretionary grants support the Administration’s commitment to fixing our nation’s infrastructure by creating opportunities for all levels of government and the private sector to fund infrastructure, using innovative approaches to improve the processes for building significant projects, and increasing accountability for the projects that are built. In addition to providing direct federal funding, the INFRA discretionary grant program aims to increase the total investment by state, local, and private partners.

<https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica/financing/infra-grants/infrastructure-rebuilding-america>

Note: Active transportation projects are generally a component of a larger project for this source.

Contact: Paul Baumer (USDOT) (202) 366-1092

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy (USDOT)
202-366-4544

FUNDING SOURCES

