

# *The meeting will begin shortly*



Snacks, water, and coffee are on the counter by the glass doors.



Trash cans are in the brown doors by the counters.



Restrooms are past the elevators to the right.



Please sign in and grab an agenda if you didn't when you came in.

A light blue map of the Houston-Galveston Area Council region, showing county boundaries and the Gulf of Mexico coastline. The map is centered in the background of the slide.

# Adaptive Communities

H-GAC Livable Centers 2026 3-part series

# Share to Prepare

Roundtable #1

April 23, 2026

# Agenda

- Introduction
- What is Adaptive Reuse?
  - Why it Matters
  - Examples
- Break
- Roundtable Discussion
- What We Heard
- Adjourn



**LIVABLE CENTERS**  
LIVE, WORK, PLAY

# ***Upcoming Livable Centers Events:***

Roundtable #2

## ***Collaborate to Innovate***

- July 23, 2026 - 9:30am – Noon

Annual land use and transportation workshop

## ***Expert Takes on What's at Stake***

- September 17, 2026 - 9:30am – Noon

# Introductions

- Name
- Organization/Industry
- Why you decided to attend

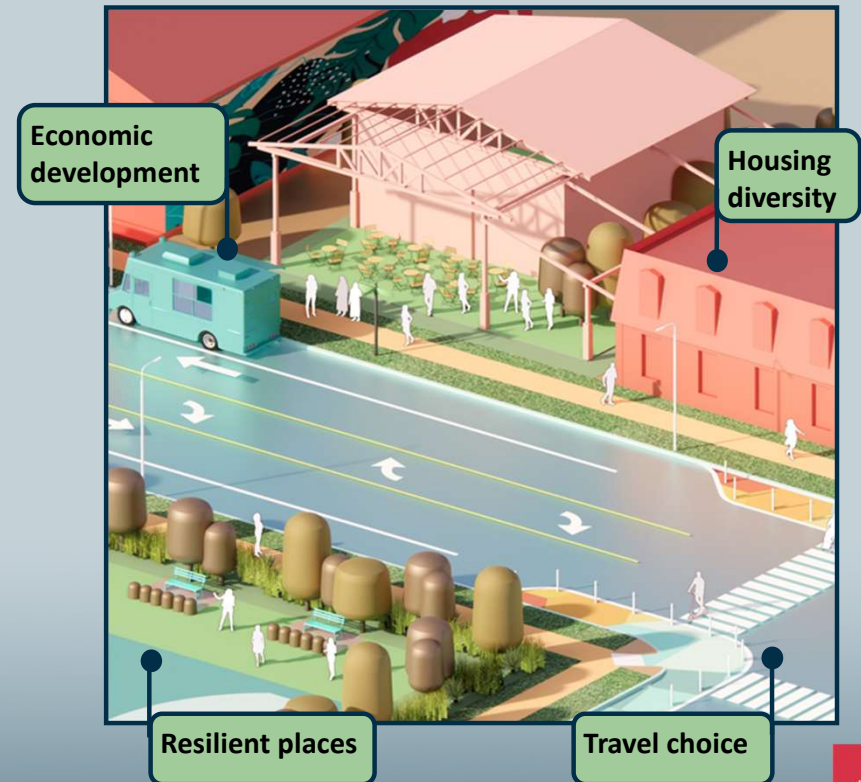
# About the Livable Centers program



- We work with local communities to reimagine auto-focused infrastructure, policies, and programs.
- We host events like these to create opportunities for education and collaboration across a variety of professions.

# Livable Centers Study Goals

- Create multi-modal travel choices.
- **Create resilient quality places.**
- Promote safe and accessible infrastructure.
- **Promote economic development and housing diversity.**



# The Goals of This Roundtable

- **Reveal challenges** and barriers experienced locally.
- **Discover opportunities** and emerging ideas.
- **Build shared understanding** across professions.
- **Identify topics for deeper exploration** in the July and September workshops.

# What is Adaptive Reuse?

Also known as recycling and conversions, adaptive reuse is the process of **repurposing an existing structure for a new use** different from its original purpose, often preserving its historic or architectural features while enhancing sustainability and functionality.

- Encyclopedia of the City, R. W. Caves

- Why it matters
  - Culture change
  - Population shifts
  - Post-pandemic live/work patterns

# Adaptive Reuse Example



The Sloane Collection (C)



3709 La Branch St.  
Houston, TX.

# Regulatory Barriers to Adaptive Reuse



Gravier Schoolhouse, New Orleans

- Rigid use separation
- Parking minimums
- Outdated standards
- Restrictive age codes

# Flexible Regulations Spark Revitalization



- Adaptive Reuse Ordinances (ARO)
- Form-Based Code
- Overlay & Incentive Zones
- Regulatory relief

# Facadism

- Maintain the façade of an existing building.
- Important for historic identity preservation.
- Often accommodates a higher density or new use altogether.



The Tower Theater

# Design Frameworks That Support Adaptive Reuse

- ***Human-Centered Design – understanding human needs and behaviors to design a solution.***
- Universal Design – designed to be usable by everyone without specialized adaptation.
- Transition Design – systemic design that plans for future transitions 20-50 years in the future.
- Co-Design, “Double Diamond” design, etc.

# Adaptive Reuse and Human-Centered Design

- Opportunity to reevaluate the human-scale experience during redesign phase.
- **Human-Centered Design** – prioritizes the needs, behaviors, and contexts of the people you are designing for.
- Current development trends prioritize space for automobiles.



# Human-Centered Design and Mobility



Solutions

Source: American Society of Landscape Architects, FHWA, Frank Blake, Theo Petritish

# Adaptive Reuse and 3<sup>rd</sup> Spaces

- Opportunity for more 3<sup>rd</sup> spaces.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> spaces** – voluntary gathering space outside of work and home.
- Modern development trends leave fewer affordable communal spaces for everyday interaction.



Post Houston

# Positive Impacts of 3<sup>rd</sup> Spaces

Build connection and belonging

Reduce burnout and isolation

Strengthen community resilience

Adaptive  
Reuse

Human  
Centered  
Design



Axelrad Houston

[Beyond the Bell: Why Third Spaces Matter for Whole-Community and School Well-Being](#) | Scanlan Center for School Mental Health - The University of Iowa

# Break

# Rigidity Check

What is one specific zoning or building policy in your community that feels like a "roadblock" to a project that would benefit residents?

# Identify Assets

Think of a vacant building or underutilized space in your community. If money and zoning weren't factors, what is one "non-traditional" use for that space that would meet a current neighborhood need?

# Evolution Gaps

In what ways have the "live, work, and play" habits of your residents changed in the last five years, and where are your current spaces failing to keep up?

# Barriers to Incrementalism

What prevents small-scale, "missing middle" developments or incremental improvements from happening in your community today?

# The Hybrid Work Ripple Effect

By show of hands – who works a hybrid schedule?

How have changing work patterns (like remote or hybrid schedules) created "dead zones" in commercial or office districts during the week? What challenges and opportunities arise?

# The “After Hours” Test

Which areas of your community thrive during the day but feel abandoned or unsafe at night?

What prevents them from being "active" 24/7?

What can we do to encourage activity?

# Evolution vs. Inventory

What is one way your community's population has changed (e.g., aging in place, young families) that current housing or retail inventory fails to support?

# The “Illegal” Neighborhood Asset

Is there a beloved, historic part of your town that would actually be illegal to build today due to current development policies?

What can be done to encourage more developments like it?

# The “White Elephant” Building

Identify a specific underutilized building in your area (e.g., a vacant school, church, or warehouse).

What is the primary reason it hasn't been repurposed yet?

# Preserving Character

When we talk about "preserving local character," are our current policies actually preserving the *spirit* of the place, or just freezing it in a way that prevents it from thriving?

How do you find a happy medium?

# What We Heard

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