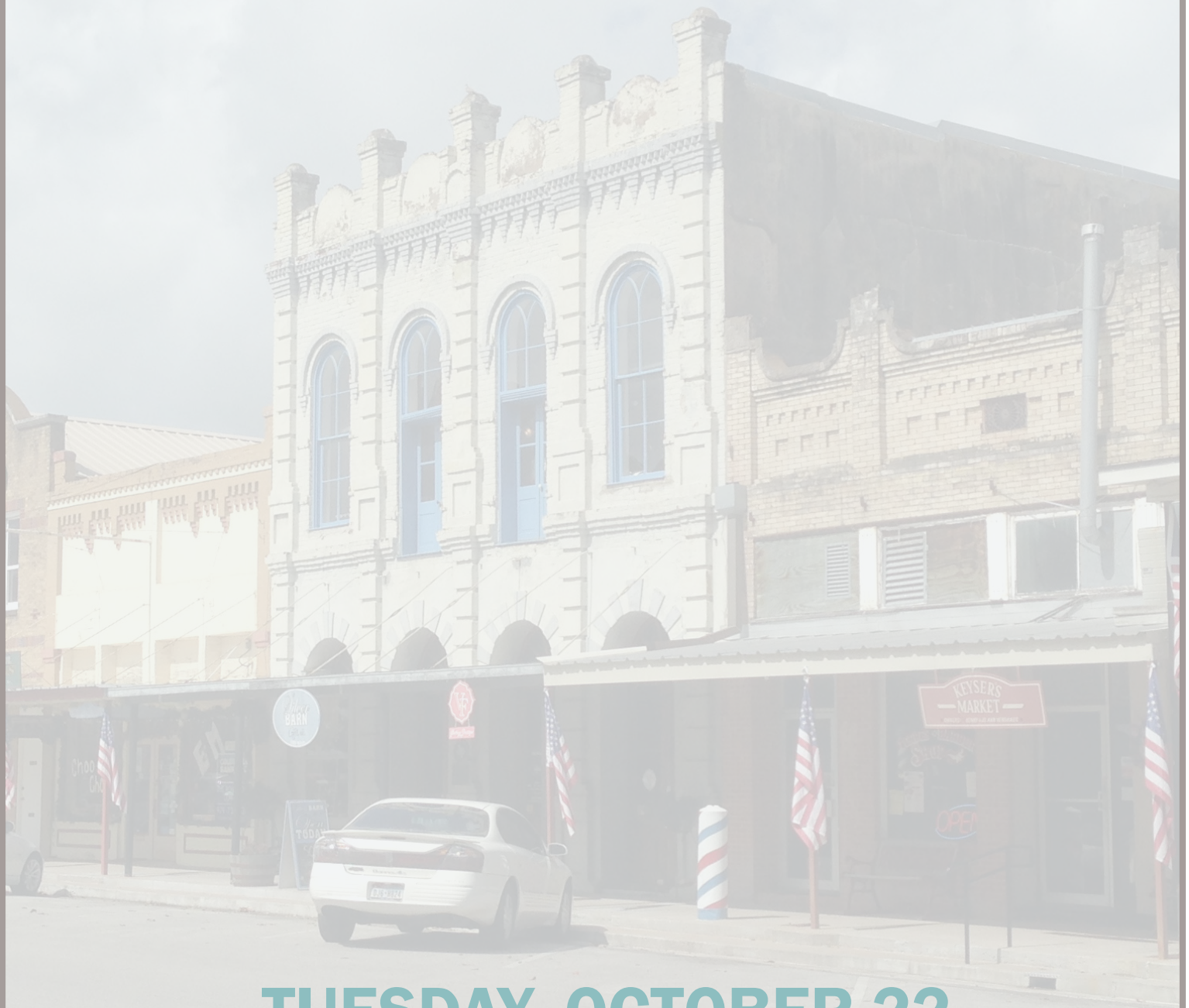


# **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION SUMMIT** **FOR RURAL AND SMALL TOWNS**



**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22**



**BRINGING BACK  
MAIN STREET**

**HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL**

# AGENDA

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**8:30 a.m. .... Registration**

**8:45 a.m. .... Welcome and Introduction**

Chuck Wemple, Houston-Galveston Area Council

**9:00 a.m. .... Session 1: Starting from Scratch**

Technical Overview – Gary Mitchell, Kendig Keast

Local Example – Leigha Larkins, City of Huntsville

Local Example – Marla Jasek, City of Bay City

Local Example – Hon. Robert K. Nelson, City of Bay City

**10:00 a.m. .... Break**

**10:10 a.m. .... Session 2: Protect Community and Stay Competitive**

Technical Overview – Shad Comeaux, Freese and Nichols

Local Example – Brett Banfield, Friends of Downtown Friendswood Association

Local Example – Andres Garza, Jr., City of Wharton

**11:05 a.m. .... Session 3: Resources and Tools**

Alan Cox, Texas Historical Commission

Jennifer Harris, Connected Texas

Todd Lang, International Economic Development Corporation

Jeewasmi Thapa, Texas Target Communities

**Noon .... Session 4: Tying it All Together: It Can Happen**

Jeff Taebel, Houston-Galveston Area Council

John Isom, City of Waller

Hon. Nancy Arnold, City of Waller

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The Bringing Back Main Street initiative offers local communities a place to share best practices and engage in a regional dialogue about revitalizing and supporting vibrant downtown spaces.

Each quarter, community leaders gather for a roundtable on topics ranging from small business support to sidewalk infrastructure.

For information about the roundtable series and for presentations from today's summit, visit

**[h-gac.com/go/bbms](http://h-gac.com/go/bbms)**

# SPEAKERS

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## HON. NANCY ARNOLD

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The Hon. Nancy Arnold has served on the Waller City Council for 11 years and is the Houston-Galveston Area Council Chair-elect for 2020. During her time on the city council, the population has almost doubled to about 3,500, with rapid growth anticipated. Waller was one of the first cities to achieve Livable Center status, and although it got off to a slow start, projects currently underway include sidewalks on major streets, and a complete revamp of downtown with wider sidewalks, improved access, plantings, and streetlights. Waller is also constructing a new city hall, civic plaza, expanded civic center, and expanded city library. A small city park was completed in 2018, with an expansion planned for late 2019.

## BRETT BANFIELD

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Brett Banfield is the President of the Friends of Downtown Friendswood Association (FDFA), a grass roots, non-profit organization he founded in 2015 with seven other Friendswood community leaders. FDFA has grown to a robust organization with 31 board members that oversees several programming events, installation of public art and amenities, and the promotion of Downtown Friendswood. He serves on Friendswood's Planning & Zoning Commission and several other community boards and committees. Mr. Banfield is the President of his family-owned real estate development company, Banfield Properties, Inc., founded in 1965, now with over \$130 million of multi-family developments across Texas and Oklahoma. Mr. Banfield received his Bachelor of Science in Finance from the University of Houston-Clear Lake.

## SHAD COMEAUX, AICP

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Shad Comeaux, AICP, is a Freese and Nichols' Associate and Project Manager in the firm's Urban Planning + Design Group. As a project manager, Mr. Comeaux has led many planning projects which include, downtown/small area plans, comprehensive plans, and higher education campus master plans. He has relevant experience in zoning, future land use, and redevelopment. His experience with community and stakeholder involvement allows him to address specific needs and concerns of clients, while building consensus among residents. Mr. Comeaux is the incoming Director of the Houston Section of the American Planning Association and is actively involved in the organization since 2009. He received a Master of City and Regional Planning from the University of Texas at Arlington and a Bachelor of Environmental Design from Texas A&M University.



# SPEAKERS

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## ALAN COX

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Alan Cox joined the Texas Historical Commission in 2017 and serves as the agency's Community and Economic Development Specialist, supporting the Texas Main Street and Town Square Initiative programs. Previously, Mr. Cox managed the Governor's Office Texas Economic Development & Tourism business research team to support recruitment and marketing efforts. He also served as a senior consultant for TIP Strategies, an Austin-based economic development and strategic planning firm. Mr. Cox holds a Master of Science in Community and Regional Planning from The University of Texas at Austin with a curriculum emphasizing economic development, physical planning, and historic preservation. He graduated magna cum laude from Texas Tech University with a Bachelor of Arts in French and minors in international studies and German.

## ANDRES GARZA, JR.

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Wharton City Manager Andres Garza, Jr. began his career in public service in 1977 as an Administrative Assistant in Pearsall, Texas. In 1979, he was promoted to Assistant City Manager in charge of Finance. He began serving as Pearsall City Manager in 1980 and served until May 1994. He has served as the City Manager of the City of Wharton City Manager since 1994. He serves as a Board of Trustee on the Texas Municipal League (TML) Intergovernmental Risk Pool, and served as the chairman from 1994 to 1996. He also serves on the TML Small Cities Advisory Council. He received a BBA Degree from Southwest Texas State University (Texas State University) and is a member of the Texas City Manager Association and International City Manager Association. His wife is Adeline Garza, and they have two children, Andrew III and Adam.

## JENNIFER HARRIS

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Jennifer Harris is the State Program Director for Texas for Connected Nation, a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Connected Nation's mission is to improve lives by providing innovative solutions that expand access to and increase the adoption and use of broadband (high-speed internet) and its related technologies for all people. Since 2005, she has held a wide range of jobs in the public sector. Her professional experience includes legislative, public policy, communications, and government affairs work in Texas and Florida. Ms. Harris earned her bachelor's degree in business administration with a focus in marketing from the McCombs School of Business at The University of Texas at Austin. She earned her master's degree in public service and administration from the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University.

# SPEAKERS

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## JOHN ISOM

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John Isom is the Director of the City of Waller Economic Development Corporation, a sales-tax funded non-profit tasked with increasing primary jobs and tax base for the City through business attraction and retention. A former Waller County Commissioner, he has served in his present position for 16 years, representing his community to business executives, developers, brokers, and site selectors in facilitating business site location and expansion. He has facilitated partnerships by networking community leaders from business, school district, university, and city/county government to work with regional organizations in economic development projects. He initiated a 2015 state law that added annexation flexibility allowing the 800+ general law cities in Texas to annex all projects to which they have provided utilities. His BBA is from the University of Houston.

## MARLA JASEK, PE, CFM

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Marla Jasek, PE, CFM, has been working in Bay City as the Assistant Director of Public Works for the past six years. She oversees coordination with developers, building permits, street and bridge, facility maintenance, equipment maintenance and recycling—everything non-utility. In addition to departmental duties, Ms. Jasek is active in county emergency management and the Local Emergency Planning Committee. Prior to joining the City, she was an engineer for the Texas Department of Transportation in the Yoakum District for 20 years. Ms. Jasek earned her engineering degree from the University of Texas in Austin.

## TODD LANG

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Todd Lang is a Senior Economic Development Associate for the International Economic Development Council, where he oversees disaster recovery efforts for the State of Texas and other communities on behalf of the Economic Development Administration. Mr. Lang has over 15 years of experience in economic, small business, and workforce development, including leadership roles with the City of New York - leading disaster recovery efforts during Superstorm Sandy, The District of Columbia, and economic development consultancy Development Counsellors International, where he advised Texas communities including Houston and Corpus Christi. Mr. Lang received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York.

# SPEAKERS

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## LEIGHA LARKINS

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Leigha Larkins is a Planner for the City of Huntsville. Hailing from North Carolina and graduating from Appalachian State University with a B.S. in Community and Regional Planning, Ms. Larkins began her career in public service as a wild land firefighter. She spent three seasons as a wild land firefighter and four seasons building hiking trails on public lands across the United States. These experiences were supported through working partnerships with public agencies at the local, state, and federal level and solidified her commitment to responsible land use planning. Before moving to Huntsville, Ms. Larkins worked as a City Planning Intern for the City of Oceanside, California, and as a Land Use Planning Technician for the City of San Marcos, California.

## GARY MITCHELL, AICP

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Gary Mitchell, AICP, has professional planning experience at the city, county, and regional levels since 1989. Over his career, Mr. Mitchell has had the opportunity to complete community plans and special studies involving a wide range of topics. His portfolio includes more than 40 comprehensive plans – in communities ranging from 2,000 to 200,000 people – with consulting engagements completed in 16 states. During his time in consulting, 12 of the communities he has assisted have received awards from divisions of the American Planning Association (APA) for outstanding examples of urban planning. He has served the past two years as Director of the APA Houston Section. Mr. Mitchell completed his Master of Urban Planning degree at Texas A&M University, after earning a B.A. in Economics at the University of Texas at Austin.

## HON. ROBERT K. NELSON

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The Hon. Robert K. Nelson began his term as Mayor of Bay City on June 13, 2019. Mayor Nelson has been a resident of Bay City since 1993, after moving from New Jersey in 1990 and spending a short time in Lake Jackson. His previous career was with LyondellBasell and Celanese. Having lived here for many years and seeing a need for improvement he decided to run for office to use his education, experience and passion to help the City of Bay City unite and nurture economic and personal development. His mission is to unite and collaborate with the residents of Bay City to foster significant relationships in order to move Bay City forward. His plans include improving streets, housing, aesthetics, and traffic flow in the city, and he plans to initiate neighborhood town hall meetings to discuss issues and receive feedback from the residents.



# SPEAKERS

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## JEFF TAEBEL, FAICP

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Jeff Taebel FAICP, is Director of Community and Environmental Planning at H-GAC, where he oversees the agency's community enhancement, environmental planning, disaster recovery, economic development, socioeconomic modeling, and sustainable development initiatives. He has 36 years of experience in urban and regional planning, including 32 in his current position. Actively involved in community service, professional development and planning education, Mr. Taebel is a former President of the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association and in 2008 was inducted as a Fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners. Mr. Taebel received a Master of Urban Planning from Texas A&M University and a Bachelor of Science in Life Sciences from the University of Nebraska.

## JEEWASMI THAPA, AICP

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Jeewasmi Thapa, AICP is the Program Coordinator for Texas Target Communities Program (TXTC) at Texas A&M University. TXTC is a service-learning program and community engagement initiative that works with under-served communities to plan for resilience. Ms. Thapa serves as a liaison between community partners and the university. She designs participatory planning process and community engagement workshops on visioning, goal setting, and needs assessments. She works with students and faculty to explore planning principles and best practices to develop place-based strategies that fit the local context. Ms. Thapa received her Master of Urban Planning from Texas A&M University, along with a certificate in Environmental Hazard Management and a certificate in Sustainable Urbanism.

## CHUCK WEMPLE

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Chuck Wemple is the Executive Director of the Houston-Galveston Area Council where he oversees all programs and services including transportation planning, community and economic development, public safety, aging services, and workforce development. He has extensive experience in addressing infrastructure, housing, small business, and economic recovery needs following natural disasters and economic downturns. His current initiatives include working with cities and counties to embrace a regional approach to flood mitigation, exploring privately funded solutions to address infrastructure and housing needs in impoverished rural and suburban areas, and preparing the region for autonomous vehicle technology. Mr. Wemple has extensive experience working on economic and community development projects in rural communities.



**Houston-Galveston Area Council**

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