

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.

Adaptive Communities

H-GAC Livable Centers 2026 3-part series

Part 3: Expert Takes on What's at Stake

Annual Land Use and Transportation Workshop
September 17, 2026

Agenda

- Introduction
- Guest Speakers
- Closing Discussion/Q&A
- Adjourn



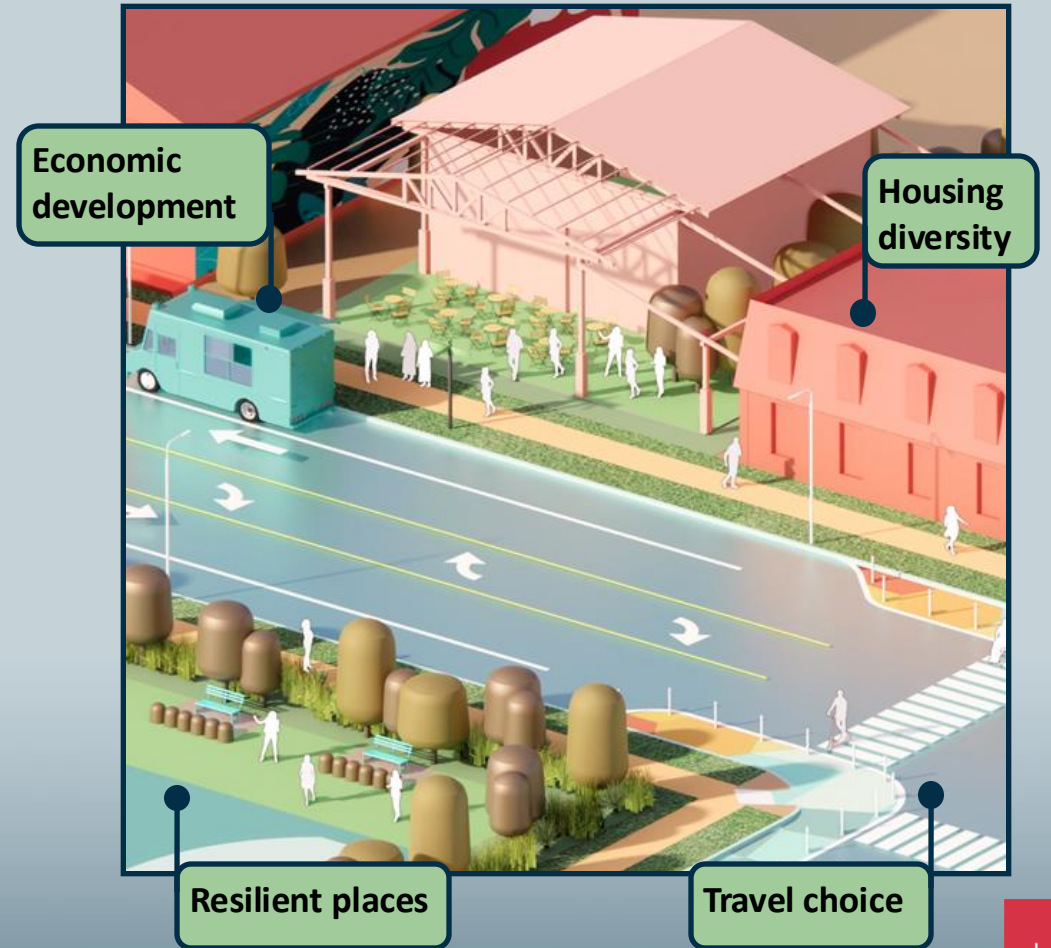
About the Livable Centers program



- 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.**



Roundtable #1 Recap

- What is Adaptive Reuse?
 - 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.
- Tension between **Market Value** and **Community Value**
- **“Sell” the value** to interested developers
 - Community Assets = Higher Value
- Progress can happen **incrementally**

Roundtable #2 Recap

Design a “win-win” adaptive reuse project!





Ruben Garza

Strong Towns Houston
Local Conversation Leader

rubengarza@strongtownshouston.org

Use It, Don't Lose It: A Strong Towns View of Adaptive Reuse

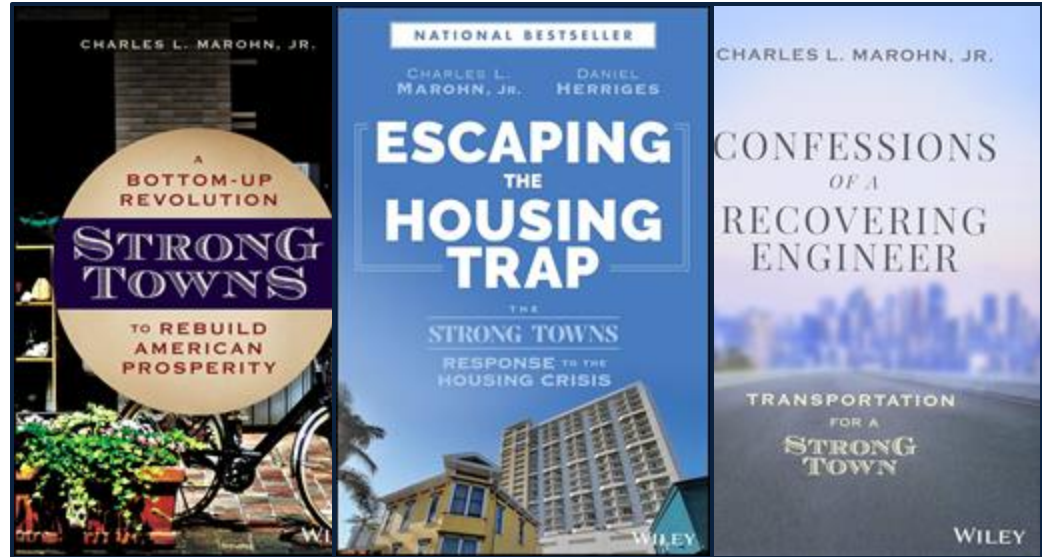
Ruben Garza, Strong Towns Houston
H-GAC Livable Centers, September 17, 2026



**STRONG
TOWNS**

Strong Towns 101

What is Strong Towns?



The Strong Towns Approach

Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up

Long-term strength comes from iteration, adaptation, observation, and feedback. Cannot have it built all at once. Oxymoronic to want Jane Jacobs-like results with Robert Moses-like methods.

Growth vs. Stability

Prioritize incremental investments and development that improve infrastructure, resilience, and livability. This means valuing stability over growth. Growth is not a goal.

Productive vs. Unproductive

Strong Towns focuses on creating places that produce more value than the resources they consume, promoting economic resilience.



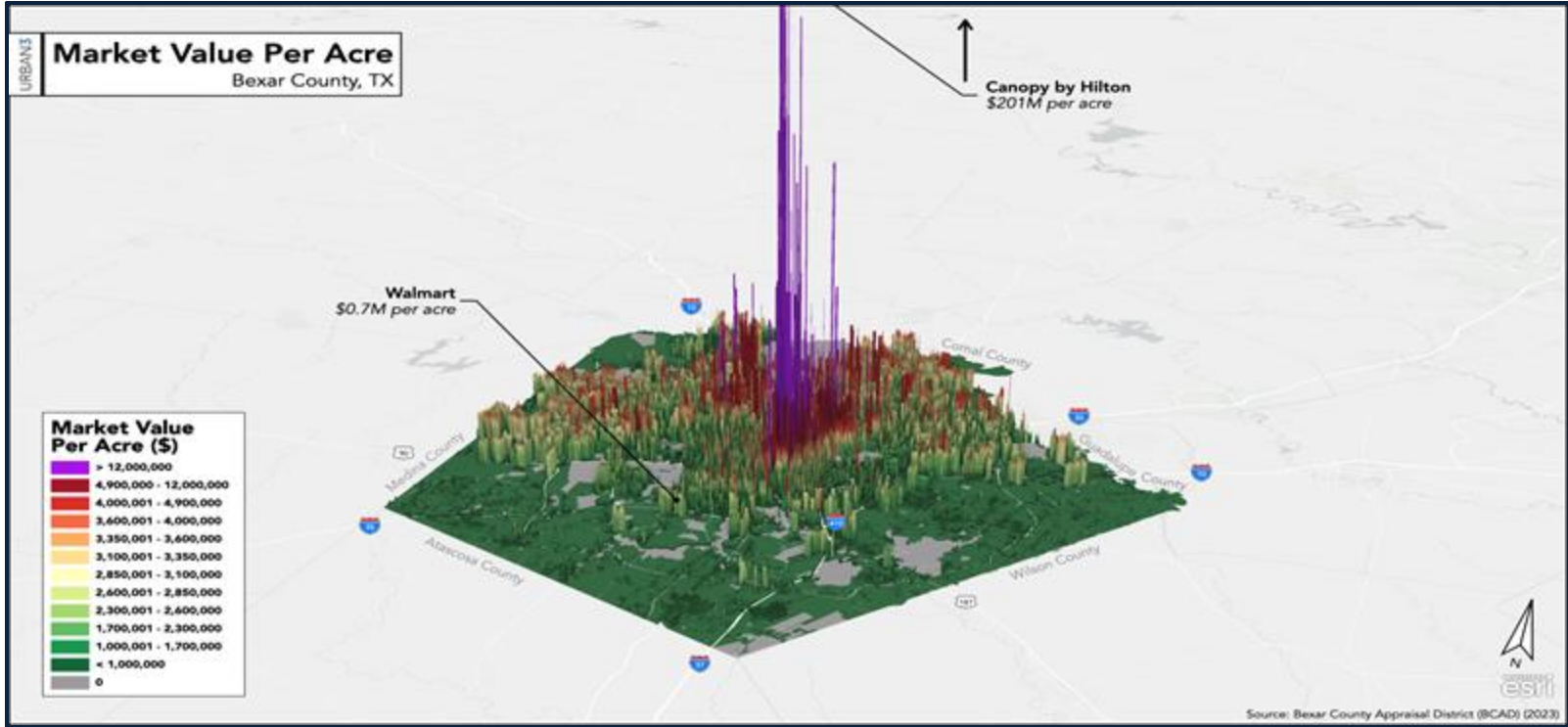
**Orderly But
Dumb**



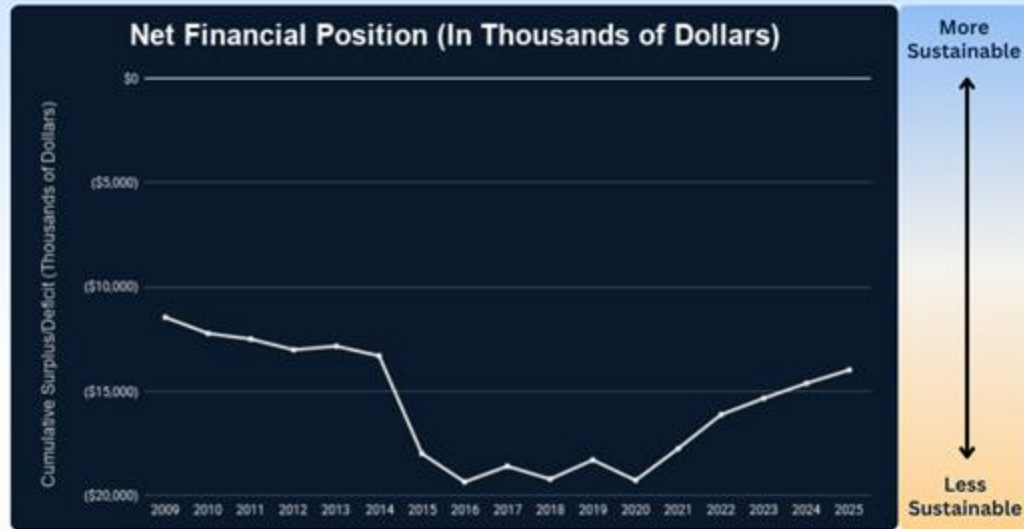
**Chaotic
But
Smart**

Strong Towns' Theory of Wealth Creation

Growth Does Not Pay for Itself



The Cost of the Suburban Experiment



Sustainability Indicator

Net Financial Position measures the difference between financial assets and liabilities. If this is net negative, it means past spending will need to be paid for with future revenue.

Adaptive Reuse & Incremental Development

Why Adaptive Reuse?



Efficient Use of Space

The infrastructure already exists! Adaptive reuse requires LOW TO NO new infrastructure! This is the most productive use of existing land!



“Activity Creates Activity”

Revitalizing local spaces and inviting local businesses is a stable, incremental, way to improve a neighborhood



Responsive and Diverse

Adaptive reuse, done right, is a welcoming space for entrepreneurs of all backgrounds

Adaptive Reuse from A Strong Towns Perspective

<u>Productive Use</u> : Vacant → Active	<u>Risk Distribution</u> : Many active users > one big fish “anchor” tenant
<u>Incremental, But Not Slow</u> : Activating smaller spaces takes less time	<u>Support System</u> : Tenants graduate to larger spaces if successful
<u>Wealth Creation</u> : Generating value that is recycled to the local economy	<u>Street Activity</u> : Increase in active hours per week
<u>Local Investment</u> : Opportunity to inspire local entrepreneurs; responsive to local needs	<u>Efficiency (<i>real efficiency</i>)</u> : Productivity per square foot (or acre) is enhanced

Good Adaptive Reuse Stories In Houston



Ox Street Kitchen



POST Houston

Why Can't We Have Nice Things (Like Adaptive Reuse)



Institutional Bias

Traditional lenders like big projects with big payoffs (and big subsidies)

And sometimes it's just cheaper to let it rot (which is why we need a land value tax)!



Fear of the “Unknown”

Communities are (rightfully) skeptical of big projects, but then they can become reflexive NIMBYs



Top-Down Codes

One-size-fits-all development codes restrict what can get built (Ex: Parking Mandates)

The Houston Parking Reform Coalition



Houston, Welcome to Parking Reform

The High Cost of Free Parking

**Underground
parking costs
~\$73k per space**

**Parking
construction
costs have risen
~50% faster
than general
inflation since
2012**

+

**Above-ground
parking costs
~\$52k per
space**

**Mandated parking
accounts for ~30-
40% of total
construction costs
for office
buildings and
shopping centers**

These costs ultimately increase:

- Rents
- Mortgages
- Housing prices
- Construction costs
- Commercial development costs

Parking Mandates: Junk Science as Policy

- Assumes a relationship between floor space, land use, and parking (however, there is no statistically significant relationship)
- Cities copy + paste existing laws into their codes
- Parking *minimums* are based on the observed *maximum* parking demand
- Parking mandates also reinforce auto-dependency (more parking, more problems)



Hou. Muni. Code 26-492

Use	Parking Mandate
Retail Store	4 spaces per 1k GFA
Hospital	2.2 spaces per bed
Bowling Alley	5 spaces per lane
Swimming Club	9 spaces per employee
Restaurant	10 spaces per 1k GFA and outdoor decks, patio, and seating areas
Bar	14 spaces for every 1k GFA and outdoor decks, patios, and seating areas

Parking Subsidies:

Who are We Rewarding and What Is Incentivized?



Mixed-Use

Tax Bill: \$8,100 or
\$1.62 / sqft



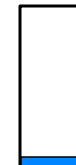
Right Single Family House

Tax Bill: \$5,300 or
\$1.07 / sqft



Left Single Family House

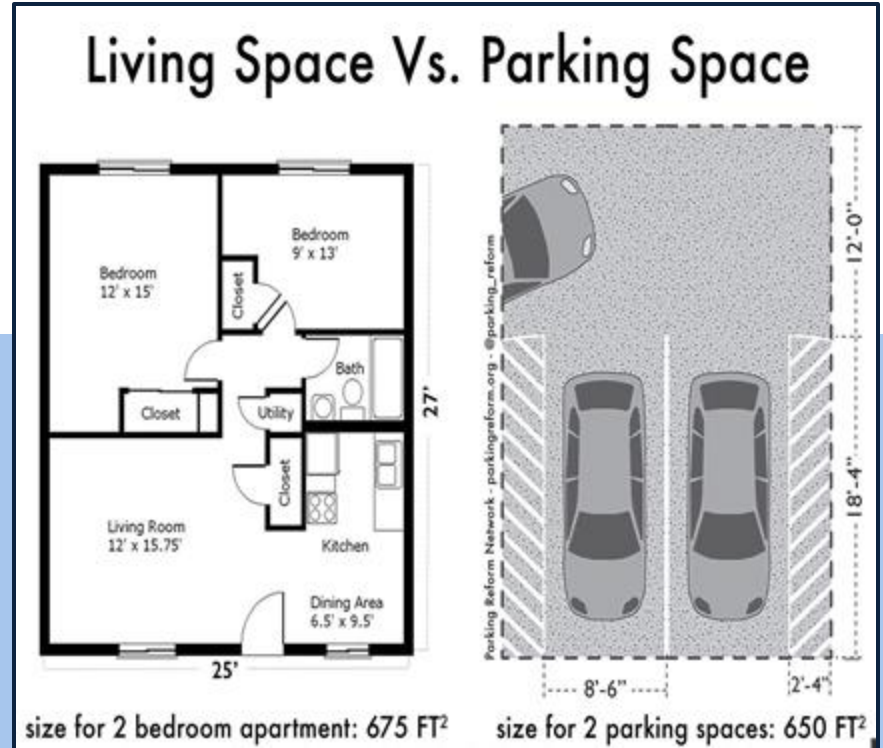
Tax Bill: \$2,708 or
\$0.55 / sqft



Vacant Lot 16

Tax Bill: \$2,504 or
~\$0.18 / sqft

End Parking Mandates & Subsidies: *Form Follows Function Parking*



What's Next for Houston?

- Join Strong Towns/Strong Towns Houston:
 - Websites: strongtowns.org; strongtownshouston.org
 - Contact: local@strongtownshouston.org;
rubengarza@strongtownshouston.org;
hannah@strongtownshouston.org
- Join the Houston Parking Reform Coalition:
strongtownshouston.org/parking-reform

Thank you for your time.

**Feel free to reach out if you have
any questions!**

Visit us at strongtownshouston.org
Contact us at local@strongtownshouston.org



STRONG TOWNS



Natalye Appel, FAIA, LEED AP

Natalye Appel + Associates Architects
Founding Principal and Design Director
natalye@appelarchitects.com



SAINT ARNOLD

BEER GARDEN & RESTAURANT







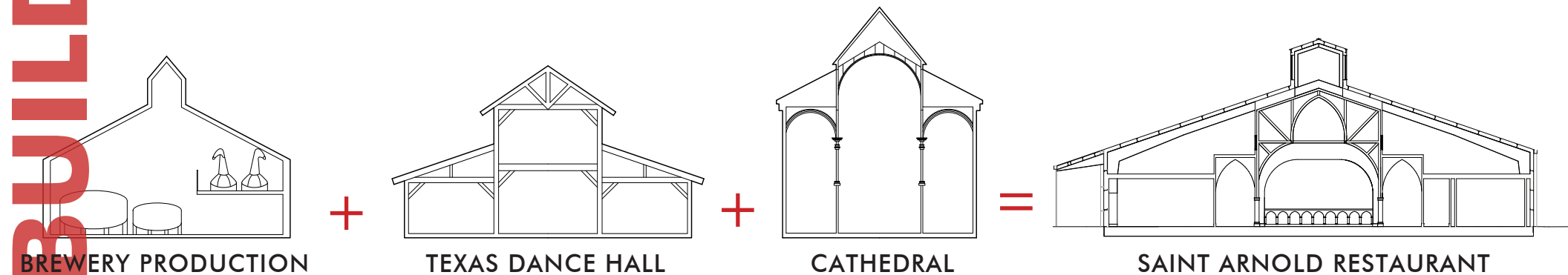


Kendalia Halle









BREWERY PRODUCTION

TEXAS DANCE HALL

CATHEDRAL

SAINT ARNOLD RESTAURANT



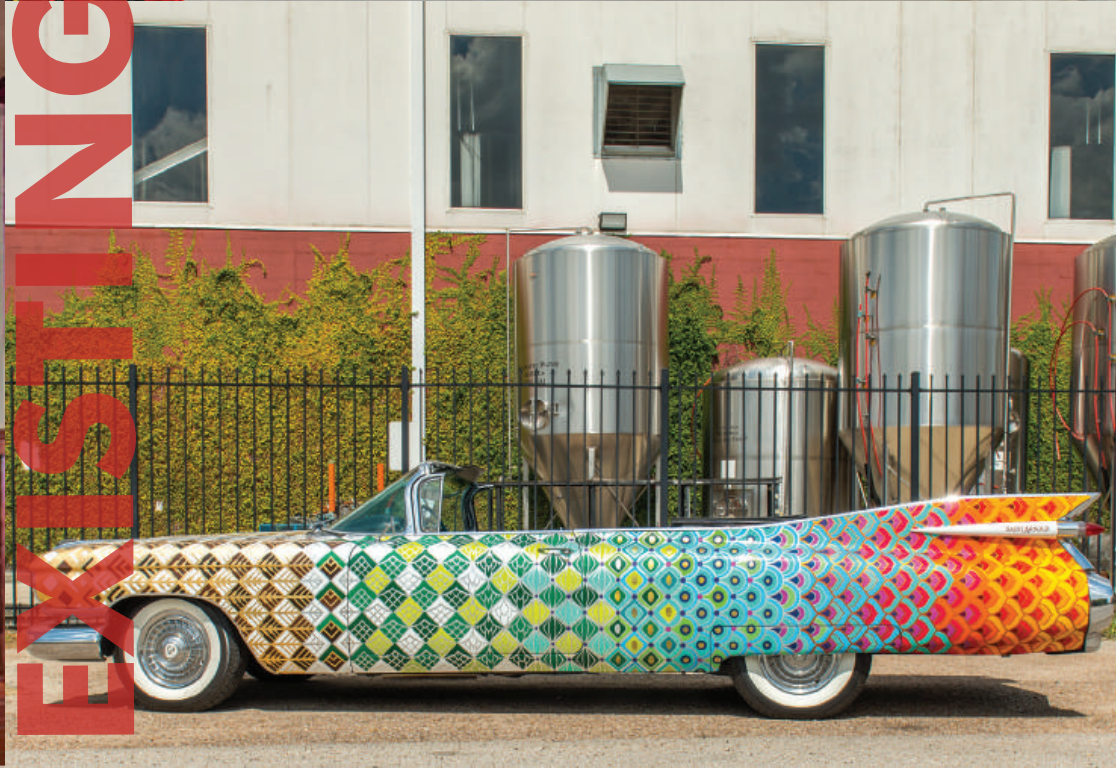
SAINT ARNOLD BEER GARDEN & RESTAURANT

PROGRAM: A new restaurant and beer garden for Saint Arnold Brewing Company, Texas' oldest craft brewery and Houston institution. Campus expansion aims to enhance brewery tradition of providing gathering places for all ages and iconic identity program by local artists and graphic designers.

DESIGN SOLUTION: Inspired by the scale of the existing brewery and industrial context, a long steel building provides rhythm, structure and shelter to the entire program, from art car display along Lyons Avenue, main artery of Houston's historic Fifth Ward, to restaurant and beer garden extending south toward Interstate 10. Gradated perforations and portals in the corrugated Galvalume siding render an increasingly translucent and ventilated skin as the beer garden opens to the "logo view" of the downtown skyline. The traditional stepped form, native to distilleries, dance halls and churches alike, supports all aspects of the program and provides tongue-in-cheek reference to Saint Arnold's position as Bishop of Metz and Patron Saint of Brewers. Individual artists created stained glass windows exploring the chemistry of beer, and side chapels celebrating the saint's legends.

SUSTAINABILITY: Materially efficient, durable pre-engineered steel building systems were selected for local production and recyclability. Air conditioning and material use are minimized, with open-air beer garden sited for S-SE prevailing breezes serving 75% of total patrons. A continuous cupola allows light and ventilation throughout, and HVLS fans and fountain cool the environment. Vegetated spaces and recycled rubber parking grid return more than 50% of the former car lot to permeability.





EXISTING BREWERY



EXISTING ICONOGRAPHY

LYONS AVENUE



PUBLIC ENTRY

EXISTING BREWERY

SERVICE

EXISTING BREWERY

ART CARS

PROMENADE

GAMES

BOCCE

LAWN

H2O

CLOISTER GARDEN

REFECTORY

NEW BEER GARDEN + RESTAURANT



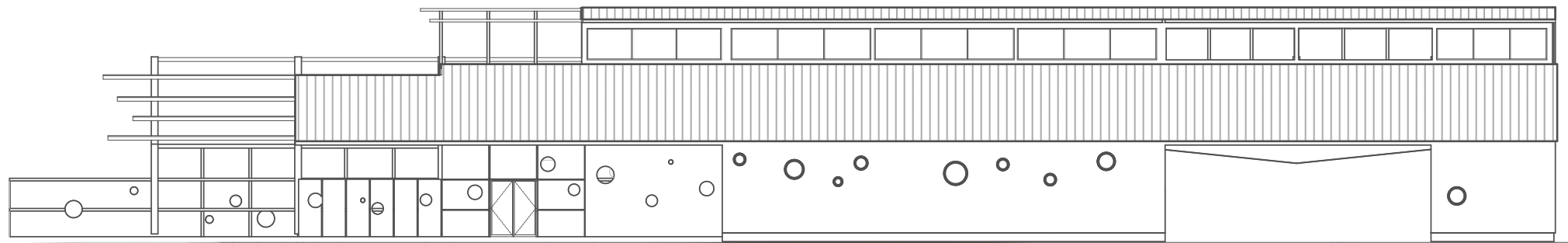
INTERSTATE 10

SKYLINE





DISSOLVING BUILDING



BEER GARDEN

ENTRY

RESTAURANT

PROMENADE

ART CARS





LOCAL ARTISTS CHAPELS

SAINT ARNOLD

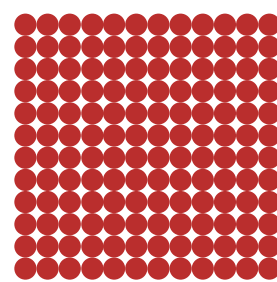
BEER GARDEN & RESTAURANT



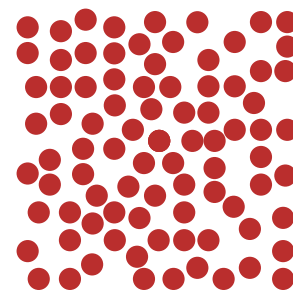




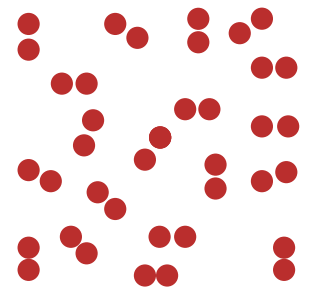
THE STORY OF WATER



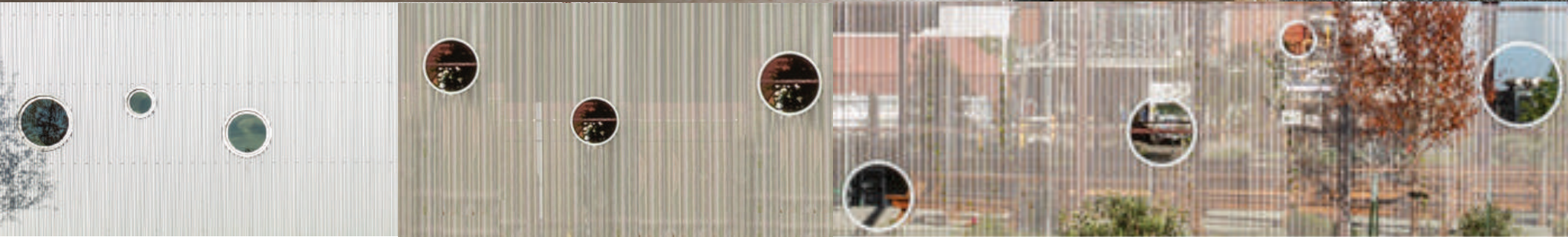
SOLID



LIQUID



GAS









SAINT ARNOLD®



HAZY PALE ALE

Double Dry Hopped with Citra, Mosaic, and Galaxy

4.7% ABV

LIMITED RELEASE

48 IBU

SAINT ARNOLD®



HAZY DOES IT

Hazy Pale Ale with a Medley of Hops

6.0% ABV

LIMITED RELEASE

30 IBU

SAINT ARNOLD®



SOUR SESSION IPA

Tart, Hoppy, and Refreshing

4.5% ABV

LIMITED RELEASE

27 IBU

SAINT ARNOLD®



RAZZ HANDS

Sour Ale with 1,600 Pounds of Raspberries

3.6% ABV

LIMITED RELEASE

7 IBU

SAINT ARNOLD®



CHERRY ON TOP

Berliner Weisse with a Touch of Real Cherries

3.8% ABV

LIMITED RELEASE

7 IBU

SAINT ARNOLD®



PERFECT PILS

Classic Bohemian-Style Pilsner

5.2% ABV

LIMITED RELEASE

40 IBU



Downtown Houston

15

Physical Connections to Surroundings

700+

New Trees

3

Green Energy Opportunities

Willow Waterhole

10

Structures Reused

3+

Performing Arts Locations

23.6

Million Gallons of Stormwater Detained

7

Event Locations

20+

User Groups Served

7

Buildings Reused

5

Habitat Types



Existing Site and Context

Surrounded on three sides by the Willow Waterhole Greenway detention and natural recreation area, this 28.8-acre former Shell Oil testing site is situated in the vibrant residential context of the Brays Oaks neighborhood. This crucial site was not used for exploration, leaving clean land to be transformed into a natural, educational, cultural and recreational destination for all of Houston. Relics of the site's history will be retained and adapted to tell the story of the rise of Houston as the nation's Energy Capital and its transformation into a sustainable city of renewable energy, with equitable access to nature and culture and cutting - edge, resilient solutions to flooding in adjacent neighborhoods.

Elevated Offshore Platform:
This elevated structure was installed and houses electrical and offshore style buildings with control equipment that operated down hole heater testing. This is a strong platform and provides elevated views of the site.



Horizontal Pipe Test Structures:
The long narrow covered structures were used to test electrical heaters and pipes. This covered structure connects the site on a north-south axis.



Shop Building:
Large shop building was built in early 2000s and used as a workshop and lab. It is the newest building on site and has a large indoor space and high ceiling making it flexible for new uses.



Old Main Garage and Office:
The old main shop/garage building with connected wash bay was built in the late 60s. It opens onto a large paved outdoor space and is adjacent to the Gantry, creating a nice outdoor room feeling.



Gantry Crane:
The gantry crane is a 120' tall structure that had a 30 ton and 5 ton bridge crane located over a test pool that is about 40x40x20 feet deep, there was 30' cased test well below it that has been cemented in. This is an iconic structure that can be seen from across the Willow Waterhole.



Tank Farm and Retention Levee:
This tank farm was part of the Process Upgrading Facility. It has a lot of interesting industrial elements and the metal tags making musical chiming sounds in the wind.



Process Upgrading Facility:
This test process upgrading facility has two newer metallic buildings. It includes a foam suppression system and ventilated building that was used as a shop area. The chimney stack is iconic structures that can be seen from across the Willow Waterhole.



Caisson Pump Test Facility:
This is the Caisson Pump Test Facility that was used to test offshore Deep-water pumps. The tank farm on the right was used to pump oil into the Test Facility.



Tank Farm:
The tank farm was used to pump oil into the Test Facility to the left. The tank farm was built and the old tanks removed around 2016. There is piping underground that feeds the oil to the unit from the tank farm and then it is pumped back after the test is complete.



Sandblasting Facility:
This was the sandblasting area that supported the maintenance of Shell America seismic ship to bables. It was converted into a warehouse for large freezers that stored core samples for lab testing. This is a large shaded outdoor space that would be great for many activities.



Administration Building:
The new administration building and warehouse designed by Cowell & Neuhaus with David Haid and built in 1961. The steel framed building was designed in the minimalist modern style of Mies van der Rohe. It is listed in the Houston Architectural Guide book as a building of historic significance.



Brown Brick Warehouse:
Also designed by Cowell & Neuhaus with David Haid. It was mainly used this as warehouse space and storage. This is a great s



Electrical Platform:
The elevated electrical structure houses a control room with a lot of electrical switch-gears and controls. This is a strong platform and provides elevated views of the site.



Molten Salt Test Loop:
This was a circulating molten salt test loop. This is an iconic structure that can be seen from across the Willow Waterhole. The upper platform provides great views of the site and downtown Houston.



Oil Derrick:
This derrick was used for vertical testing. Two cranes were used to work pipe with derrick during testing. A 2000 ft. well under derrick was used for testing, drilling, and running cables. This is an iconic structure that can be seen from across the Willow Waterhole.



Horizontal Pipe Test Structures:
The long narrow covered structures were used to test electrical heaters and pipes, and pipes. This covered structure connects the site on a north-south axis, along the eastern border of the site.



- Buildings to keep:** These buildings appear to be in good condition, have historical significance, visual appeal and usable/ functional spaces.
- Structures to keep:** These structures appear to be in good condition, have historical significance and visual appeal.
- Buildings and Structures to remove:** These structures are either too small to be reused, in a deteriorated condition or may be in a location that needs to be cleared, i.e. they create physical or visual barriers within the site.

Existing Buildings and Structures



COMMUNITY

**MAXIMIZE PARK
POPULARITY SO THAT
THERE IS
LONG-TERM VITALITY
AND CARE FOR THE
PARK.**



ECOLOGY

**ENSURE LONG-
TERM PROJECT
SUSTAINABILITY SO
THAT IT IS A BELOVED
TREASURE FOR
GENERATIONS TO
COME.**



INDUSTRY

**INTEGRATE OLD
AND NEW SO THIS
COMMUNITY ASSET
IS UNIQUELY OF THIS
PLACE.**



CULTURE

**PROVIDE EQUITABLE
ACCESS SO THAT ALL
CAN EXPERIENCE THE
SPACE AND BE PART
OF ITS VITALITY.**

Houston is the most diverse city in the USA. Are there traditions, activities, and events from your community that we can include in this site?

**AFFORDABLE RENTAL
VENUES/SPACE**

DOG PARK

SUMMER CAMPS

SKATE PARK

**CULTURAL EVENTS
(FOOD, HOLIDAYS,
GATHERING)**

BASKETBALL

Building resilient, lasting places means creating habitat where creatures can thrive. Being in nature also makes people feel emotionally and physically. What parts of nature do you want to experience here?

**A VARIETY OF
ECOSYSTEMS**

**OBSERVATION
SPACES IN SHADE**

**VARIETY OF WATER
SPACES FOR
WILDLIFE**

**SAFE WILDLIFE
MIGRATION**

**CONNECTIONS TO
SURROUNDING
TRAILS**

TREES

The industrial artifacts and buildings are one a kind! How could you imagine transforming these into places for playing, exploring or relaxing?

OIL & GAS MUSEUM

**USE OF PIPES IN
WATER PLAY SPACES**

MAKER SPACES

INVOLVE STUDENTS

RE-USE STRUCTURES

Music, Arts, and Culture open your minds to new ideas and bring people together. What kinds of arts would you like to see here?

**PERFORMANCE
SPACE OF DIFFERENT
SIZES**

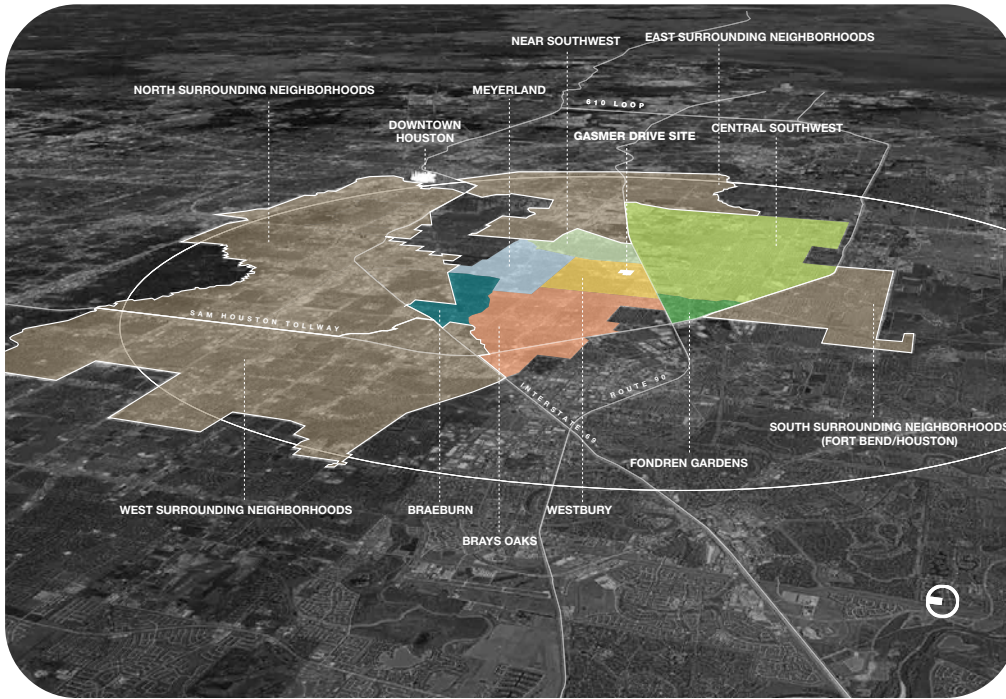
FESTIVALS

**MUSEUM &
SCULPTURE GARDEN**

VISITOR CENTER

MARKETS & FOOD

Masterplan Goals and Programming

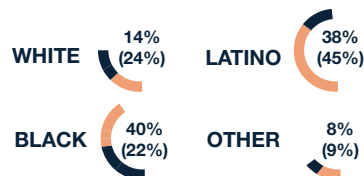


BRAYS OAKS

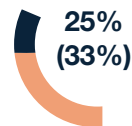
**MEDIAN
INCOME
(VS. HOUSTON
OVERALL)**



**DIVERSITY
(VS. HOUSTON
OVERALL)**



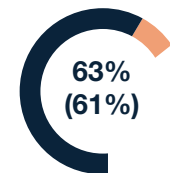
**BACHELOR'S
DEGREE (VS.
HOUSTON
OVERALL)**



**2000-2019
POPULATION
GROWTH
(VS. HOUSTON
OVERALL)**



**% FAMILY
HOUSEHOLDS
(VS. HOUSTON
OVERALL)**



COMMUNITY

The site is located in an area of high socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic diversity, creating a space in which people of all backgrounds come together in a variety of ways within existing educational, recreational, religious and cultural entities. Extensive community engagement during the planning process identified many needs and opportunities to provide crucial programming within the new park, including play, education, music, theater, maker space, community gathering, and nature.



POND/WETLAND/RAIN GARDEN
3.2 Acres, 11% of site



OAK SAVANNAH
4.7 Acres, 16% of site



PINEY WOODS
2.4 Acres, 8% of site

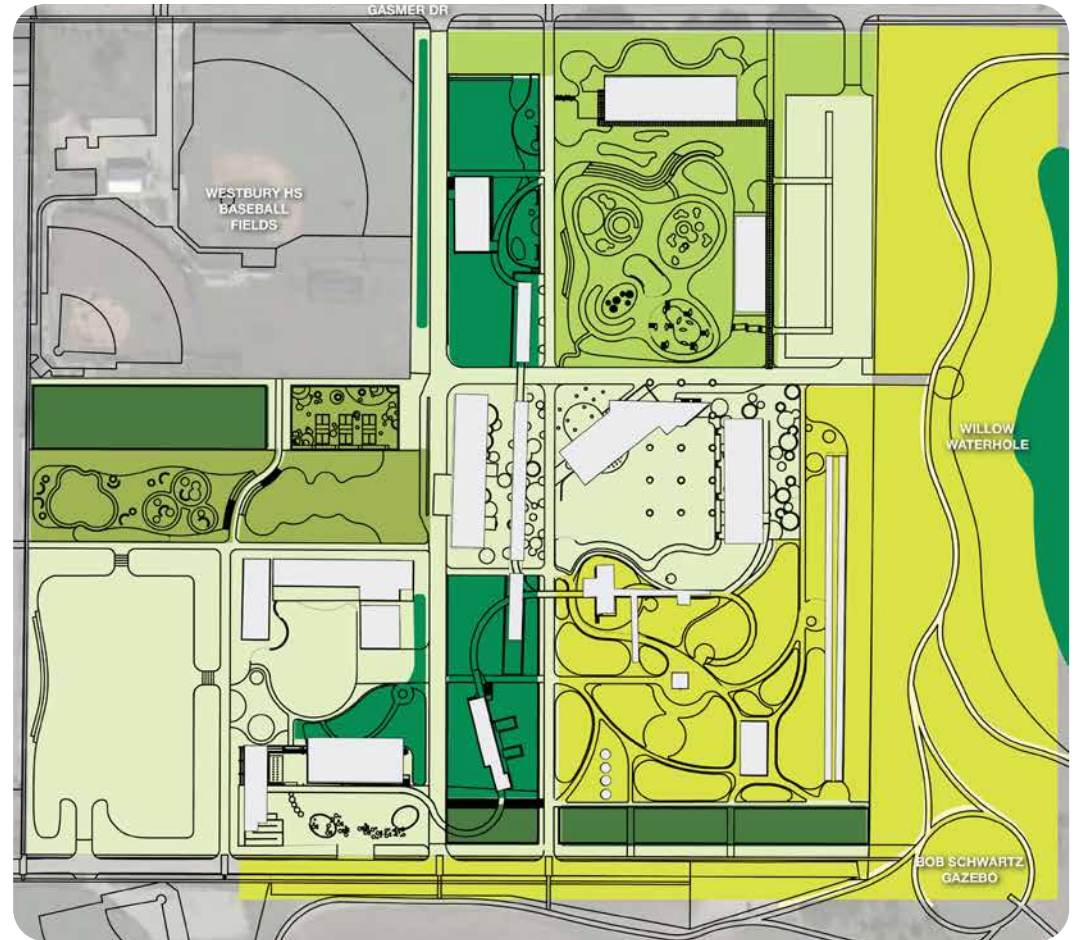


BIG THICKET
1.6 Acres, 5% of site



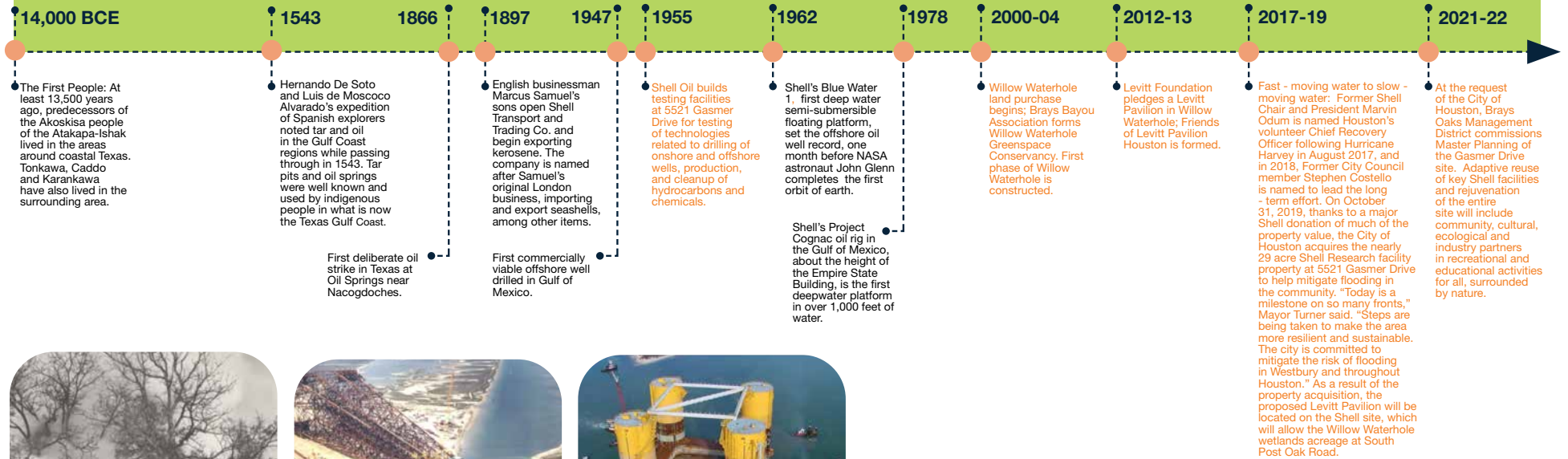
PRAIRIE
4.4 Acres, 15% of site

700+
New Trees
Planted



ECOLOGY

Through the introduction of native plantings belonging to regional ecosystems, the project will provide much needed biological diversity to the neighborhood while reducing required park maintenance as plantings adapt to their environment. This approach also provides wildlife habitat and neighborhood resiliency, storing and cleaning water during flood events.



INDUSTRY

Today, the site holds important relics of its past use as a testing site for Shell. Tomorrow, these pipes, towers, derricks and test platforms will demonstrate Houston's transformation from the carbon Energy Capital of the World into a sustainable, resilient city of the future.

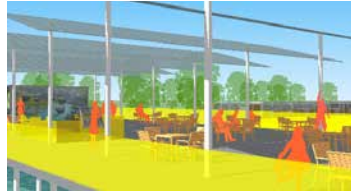
EVENT CENTER



THEATER PLAZA



PLATFORM CAFE



LEVITT PAVILION



COMMUNITY CENTER



EDUCATION CENTER



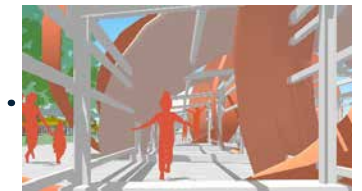
PROMENADE



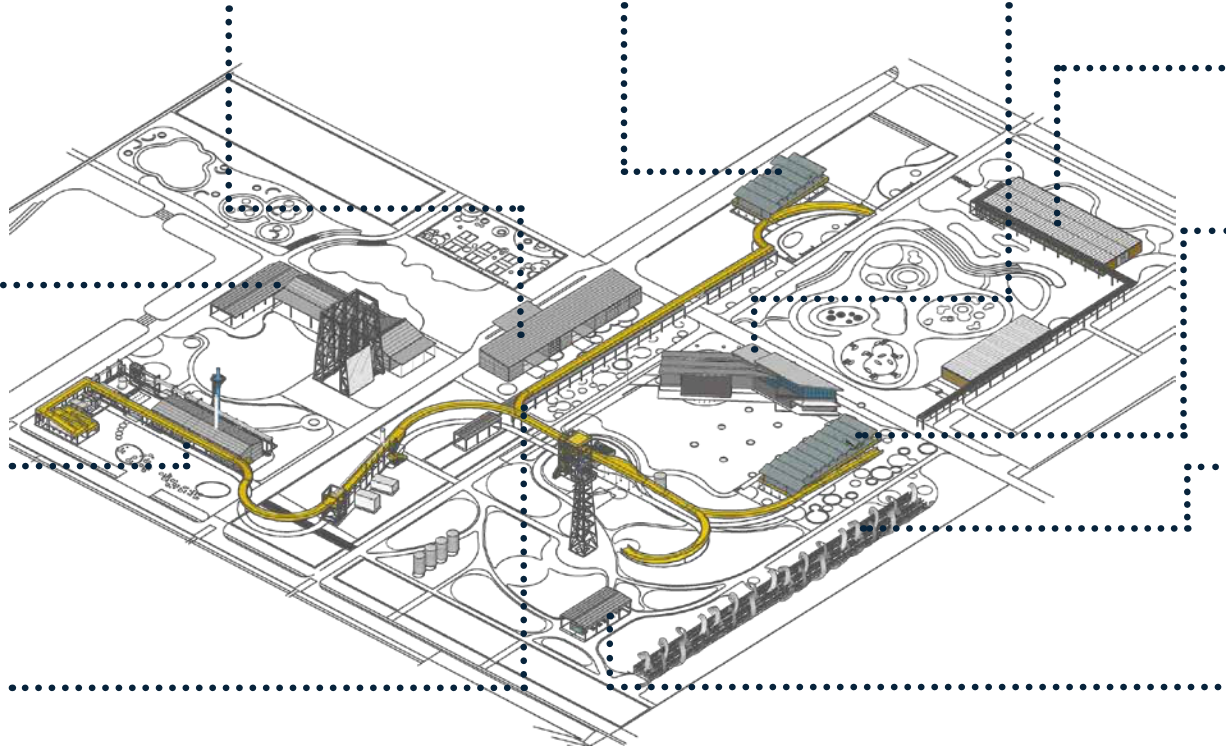
HOSPITALITY PLATFORM



PUBLIC ART DISPLAY



FIELD STATION



17
Structures
Reused



CULTURE

New recreation, education, event, community, and performance centers will arise from adaptive reuse of existing buildings and structures on site. Interventions are designed to maintain the existing character of the structures while providing exceptional access to cultural opportunities.

DETENTION

A whole site was purchased to increase detention for the surrounding neighborhood. The site must hold 60 acre-feet of storm water, equivalent to about 30 Olympic swimming pools. If one were to store this volume of water within a four-foot deep trench, 667,000 square feet (15.3 acres) would be required—or about 53% of the Gasmer Drive redevelopment site. An additional 15 acre-feet is needed for the site's planned development. Using the team's understanding of structures to be kept and the site's circulatory grid, ways were found to calculate and spread out the detention into different zones, allowing programmable spaces to fit within the site while meeting detention objectives.



An example of the 75 acre-feet of detention, at 4' deep.

DUTCH DIKES

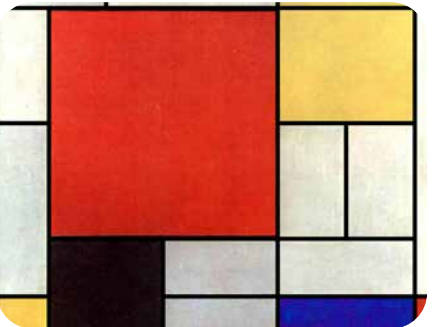
Given the amount of detention needed on site, the team drew inspiration from dikes in The Netherlands. In such dikes, formal alleys are shaded with evenly spaced trees, and the water is sloped away using long canals which keep the space functional even during flood events. The long canals are constructed largely in part to use the land for farming, while allowing the water to exist on site. The process dates back to the Renaissance era.



Beemster Polder, The Netherlands

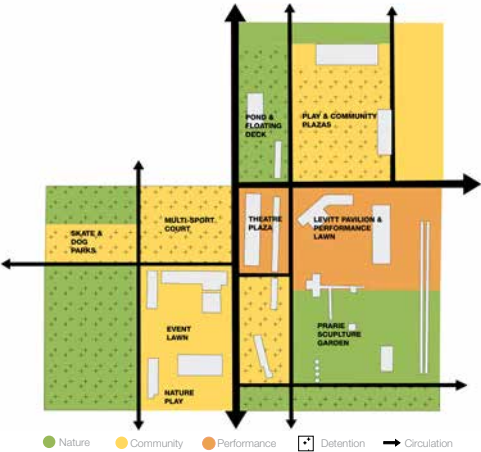
MONDRIAN

Observing the smaller "rooms" these paths created, the team recalled the work of famed Dutch Modernist artist Piet Mondrian. The existing circulations routes, once lined by trees could create separate "rooms" - each with its unique program and approach to dealing with stormwater. This layout could be easy to construct, and simple to plot on a surface while still maximizing efficiency.



Composition with Large Red Plane, Yellow, Black, Grey and Blue (1921) by Piet Mondrian

FRAMEWORK



OIL AND WATER

EMULSION
The site was built on experimentation of oil extraction fittings and processes. The patterns of circles and bubbles created when oil and water meet, and refuse to mix, offered inspiration for textures in contrast to the formality of Mondrian's inspirations. The process of emulsion offered a connection back to the story of our site while providing interesting textures for the plan and programmable spaces within it.



When oil and water meet, and refuse to mix, interesting patterns of circles and bubbles emerge.

PIPES

TOOLS
The construction of these buildings/structures included intricate pipework for carrying out experiments. Pipes, much like streets, transport things from one place to another, and thus the team felt it appropriate to integrate the site's pipework on a larger scale, perhaps by incorporating an interpretative experience that would allow users to make their way around the site in a very intentional way.



Several test structures on site were used to conduct tests related to pipe fittings.

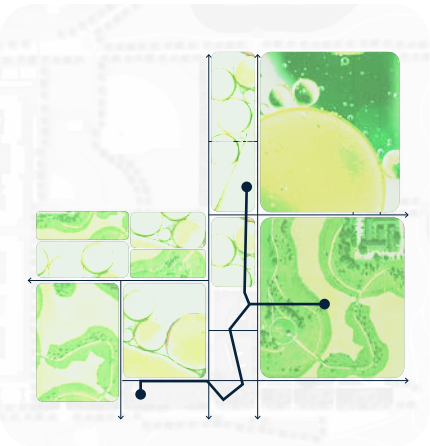
WILLOW WATERHOLE BAYOU

CURVES
It was important to not only draw inspiration from forms found within the site, but from those outside of it. The Willow Waterhole Bayou features informal geometries that replicate the form of a natural lake. This form also allows ways to introduce visual interest, and views. Our site, although bounded by very rudimentary property lines, should have dialogue with the Willow Waterhole Bayou landscape.



Our site with the 60 ac/ft and 15 ac/ft of detention at 4' deep.

TEXTURE



Framework and Texture

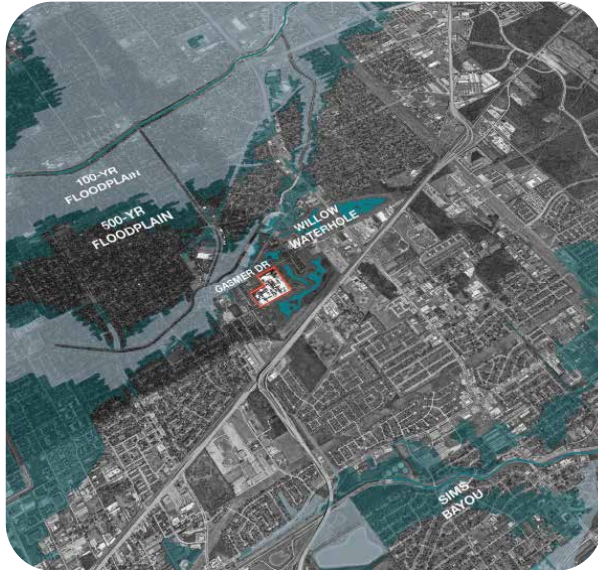
Project organizational framework was inspired by Dutch art and dikes - a beautiful infrastructure for living well with a super - abundance of water, while textures inspiring park interventions reflect the existing landscape and industrial relics found on site.

- ① THE BIG THICKET
- ② FLEX-SPORT COURT
- ③ SKATE PARK
- ④ DOG PARK
- ⑤ FLEX LAWN
- ⑥ EVENT LAWN
- ⑦ PERFORMANCE LAWN
- ⑧ RAIN GARDEN
- ⑨ FOOD TRUCK PLAZA
- ⑩ SPLASH PAD
- ⑪ NATURE PLAY
- ⑫ OVERLOOK
- ⑬ PRAIRIE SCULPTURE GARDEN
- ⑭ PUBLIC ART DISPLAY
- ⑮ PLAY AREA
- ⑯ COMMUNITY PLAZA
- ⑰ FLOATING DECK
- ⑱ LIVE OAK COURT
- ⑲ THEATER PLAZA
- ⑳ BACKSTAGE + BIRD FRIENDLY WINDMILLS
- ㉑ GASMER + DRYAD STREETSCAPES
- ㉒ CONNECTIONS TO WWH
- ㉓ POTENTIAL EVENT PARKING
- ㉔ BIRD BLIND



The Gasmer Drive Redevelopment Property is poised to be a new kind of destination for the community and the greater Houston region. The plan embraces all facets of the site, weaving together the location's history, contemporary arts, programming, culturally rich and diverse community, ecology, and stormwater detention to tell a new story about urban transformation. Rather than wipe away the past, the master plan illustrates how we can repair our landscapes while embracing the history of the site and its ties to the oil and gas industry.

Masterplan



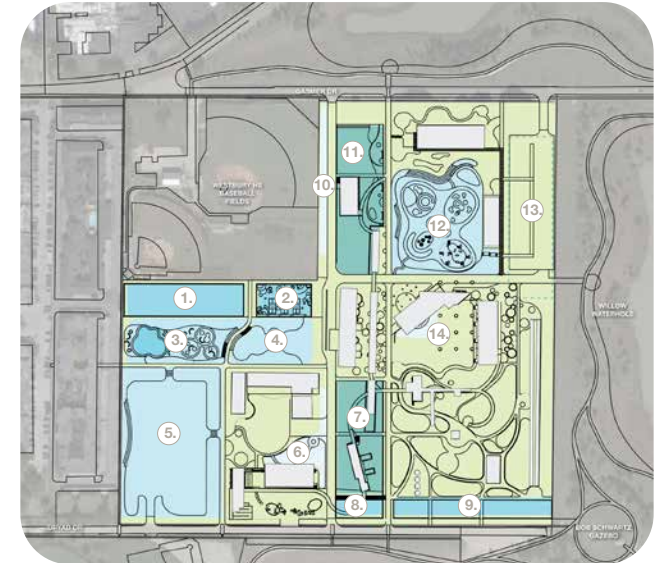
100 year flood 500 year flood

DRY CONDITIONS



Accessible space (23.83 AC | 85%)
Strictly Planting (2.37 AC | 8.4%)
Ponds/Wetland (1.8 AC | 6.4%)

WET CONDITIONS



Accessible space (16.2 AC | 56%)
Underground Cistern (1.7 acres | 6%)
10' Detention (1.8 AC | 6%)
4' Detention (6.7 AC | 23%)
2' Raingarden (0.5 AC | 2%)
Wet pond with 4' Detention (1.9 AC | 7%)

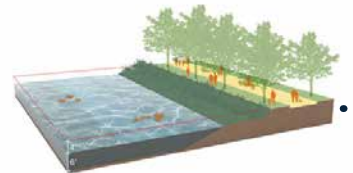
23.6
Million
Gallons
Detained

Stormwater Detention

The Gasmer Drive site was first acquired by the City of Houston to increase detention for the surrounding neighborhood. To achieve the City's objectives, the site must hold 60 acre-feet of stormwater, and an additional 15 acre-feet are needed for the site's planned development. If one were to store this volume of water within a four-foot-deep trench, 667,000 square feet (15.3 acres) would be required, consuming a majority of the site. Using the team's understanding of the structures to be kept and the site's circulatory grid, detention was distributed into different zones and strategies, allowing programmable spaces to fit within the site while meeting detention objectives.



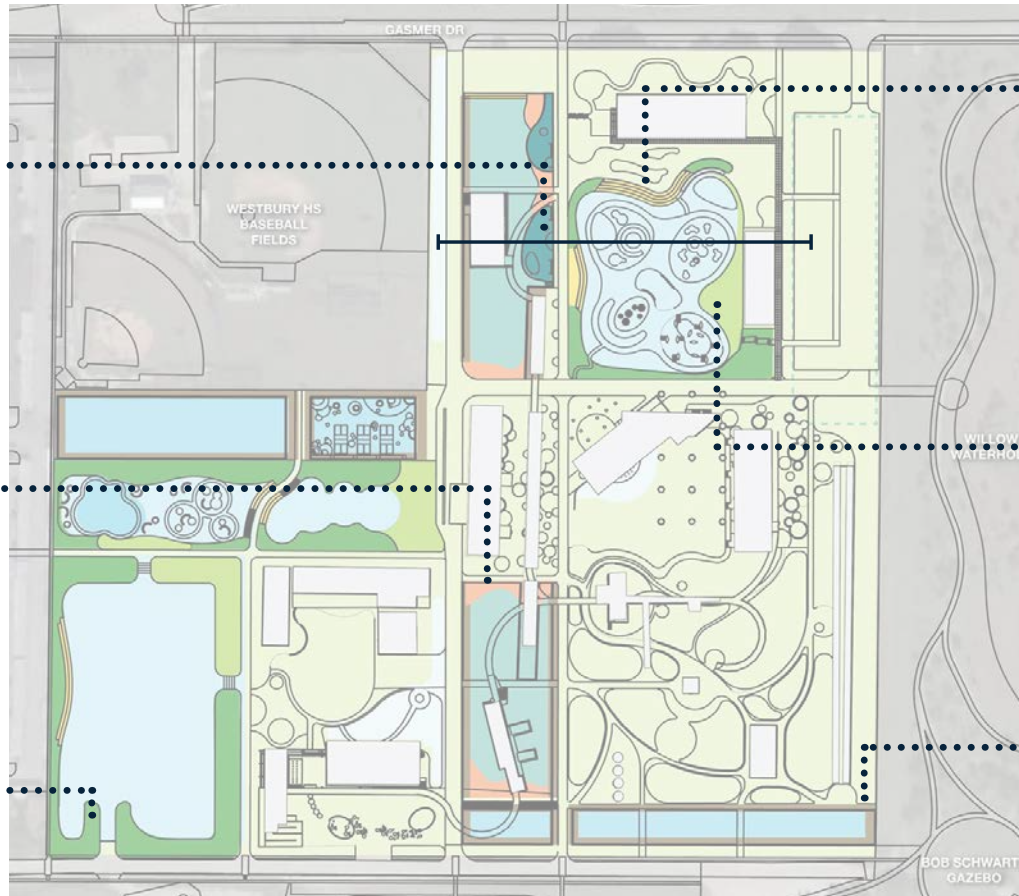
DECK (4' DETENTION)
260 LF, 3.5% of edges



WETLAND (4' DETENTION)
400 LF, 5.5% of edges



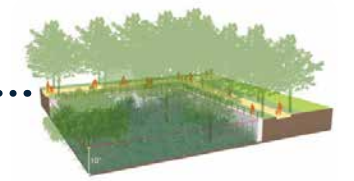
SHRUB (4' DETENTION)
2450 LF, 34% of edges



STADIUM SEATING (4' DETENTION)
720 LF, 10% of edges



LAWN (4' DETENTION)
950 LF, 13% of edges



WALL (10' DETENTION)
2440 LF, 34% of edges



The plan proposes six ways to engage detention programs within the plan, with multiple edge conditions to create diverse spaces. The edge conditions create a variety of experiences, organize circulation, and provide different opportunities for habitat and recreation.

Detention Character and Edge Conditions



Elevated Viewing



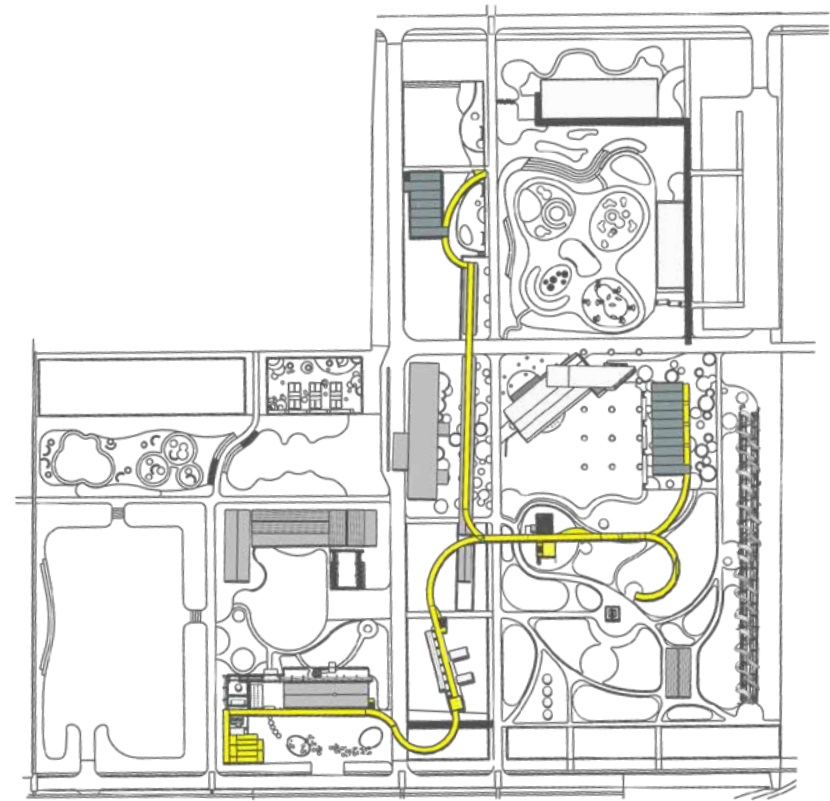
Interpretive Signage



Industrial Exhibit



Accessible Circulation



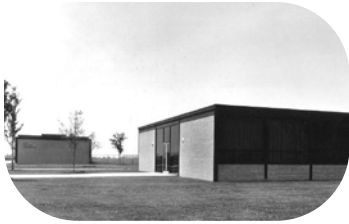
Elevated Viewing and Circulation



Community Space



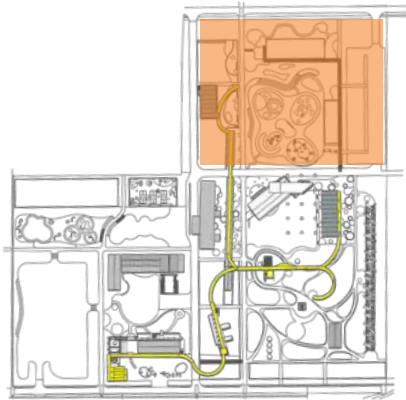
Offices



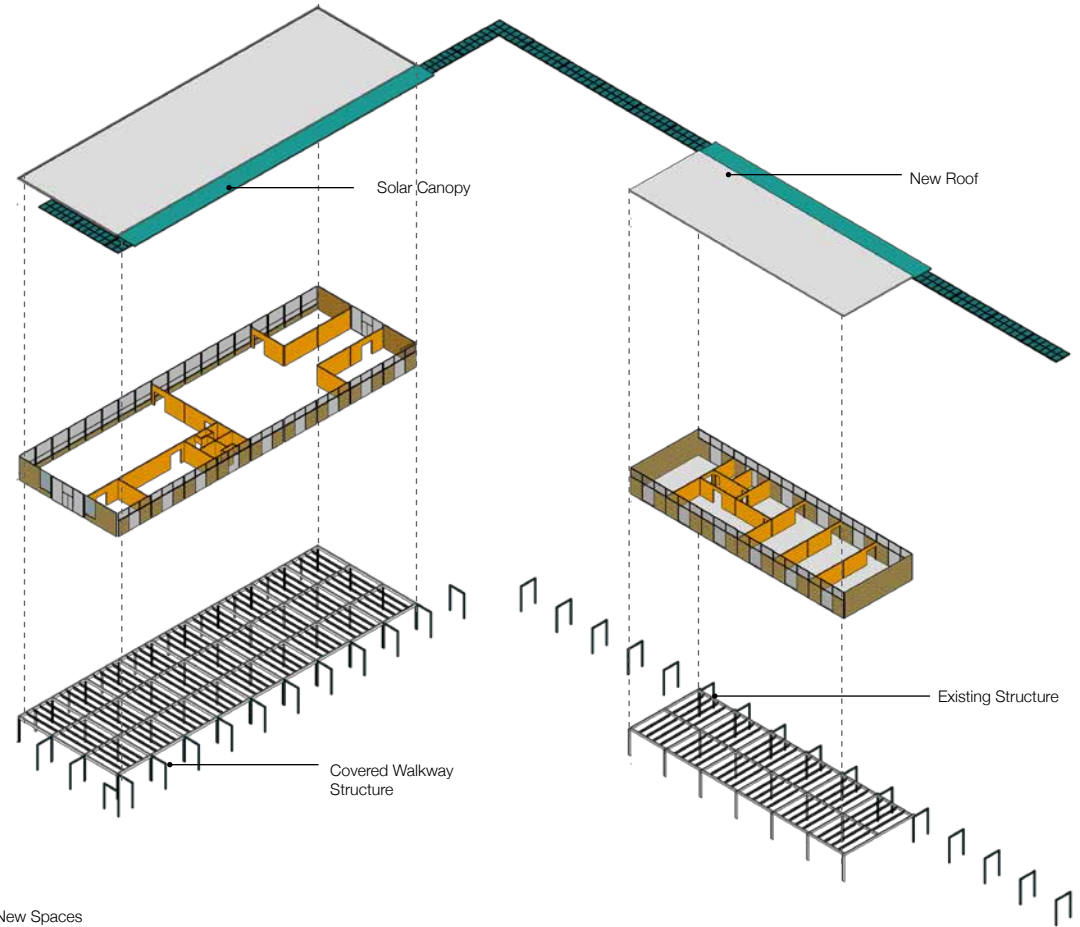
Gallery



Workshops



Community Center





Community Theater Company



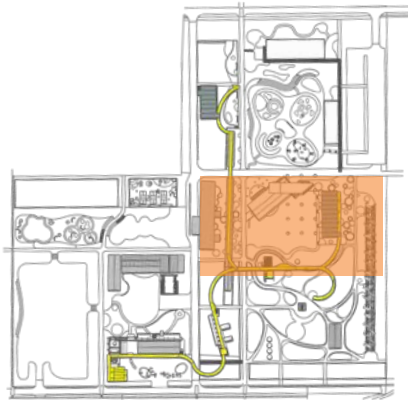
Children's Theater Camp



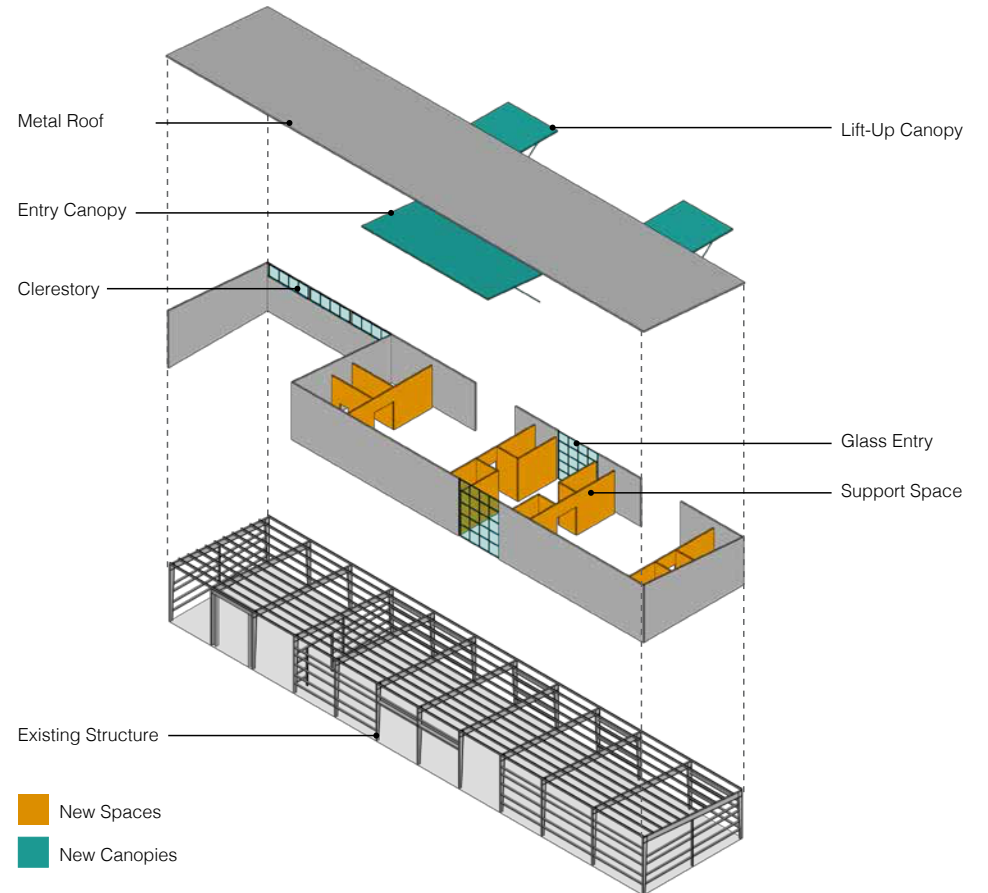
High School Theater



Flexible Performance Space



Performance Center





Farmers' Market



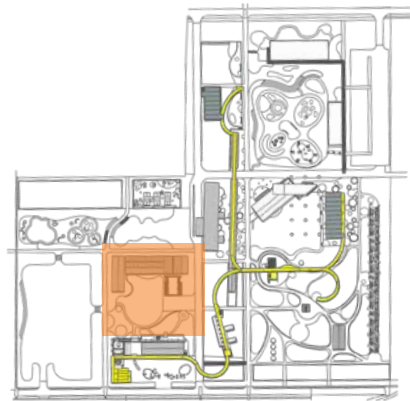
Outdoor Movies



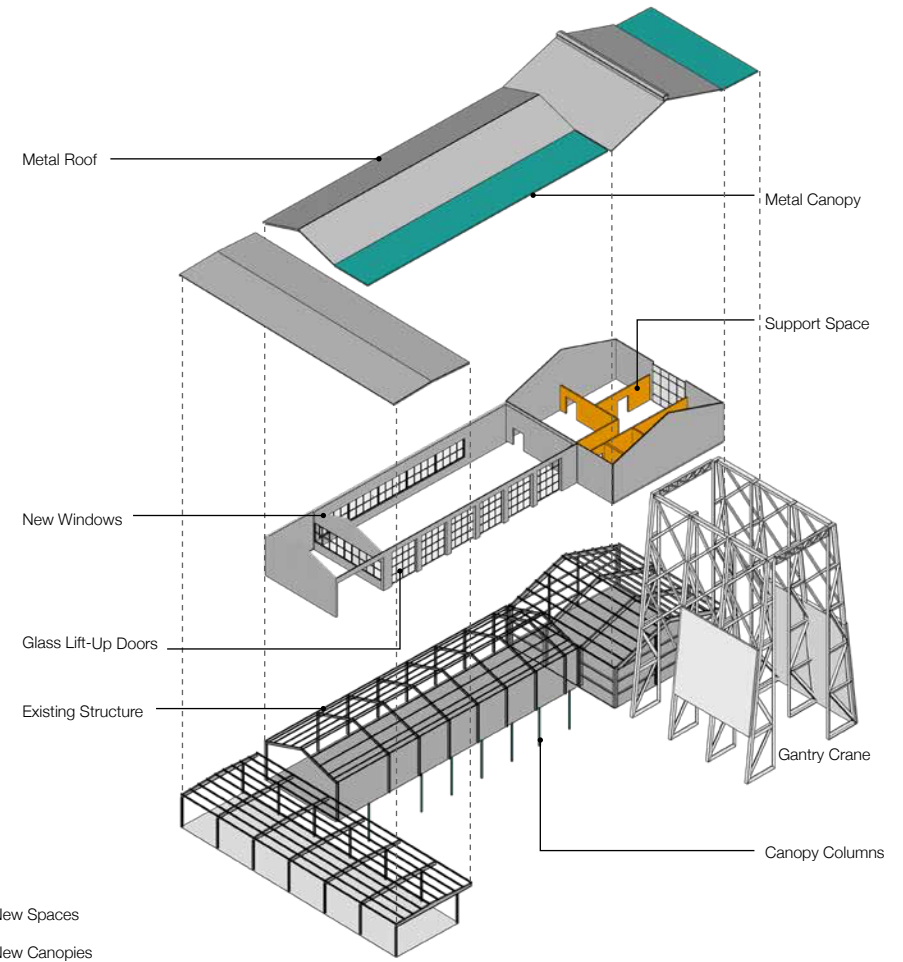
Outdoor Performances



Event Venue



Event Center





Educational Play



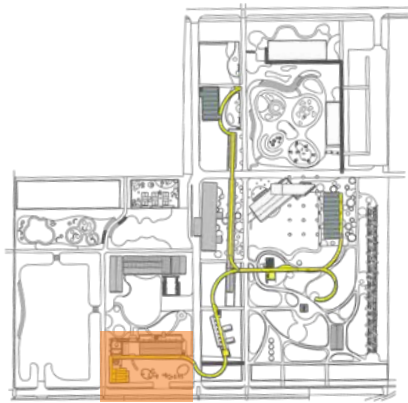
Interpretive Signage



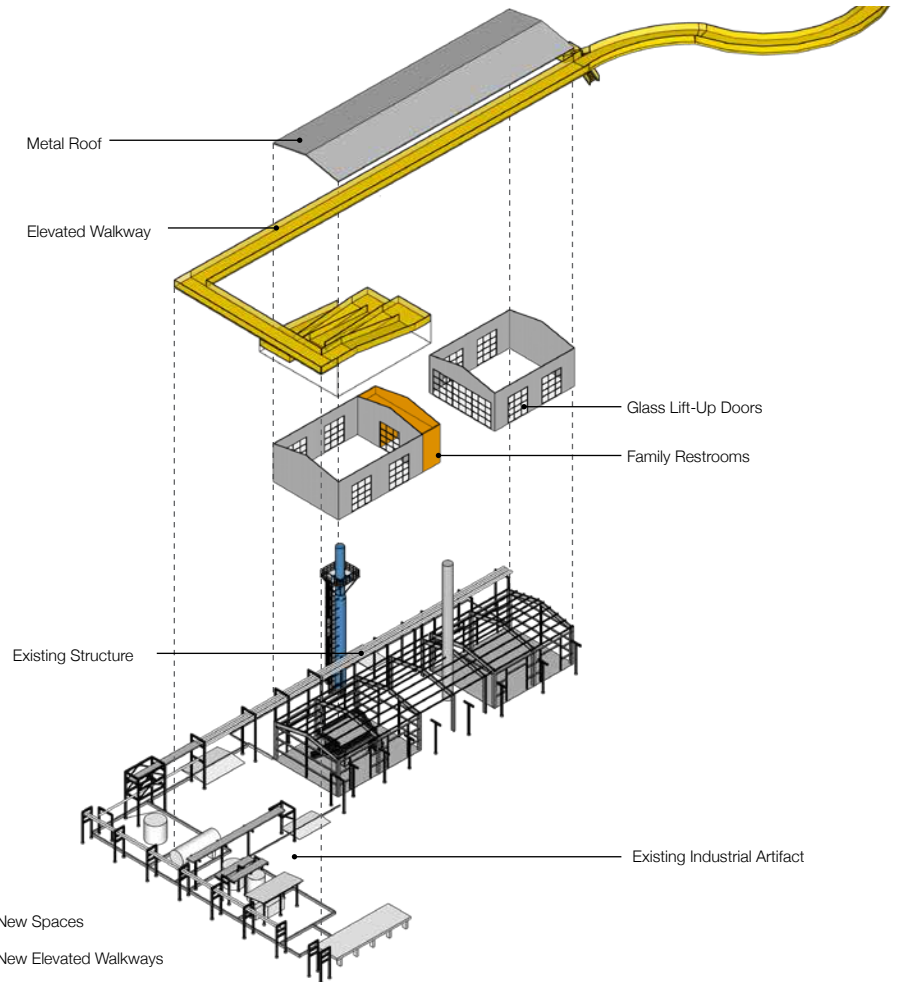
Industrial Exhibit



Education Center



Education Center





Rainwater Collection
Existing Tanks



Bird-friendly
Wind Turbines



Solar Canopies
+ Covered Walkways



Dark Sky Park and
Event Lighting



Most buildings will be able to collect rainwater for storage in existing tanks. Solar panels on canopy structures and bird - friendly wind turbines provide energy throughout the site, and Dark Sky lighting maintains crucial wildlife habitat and safe migration pathways. Juxtaposed with existing petrochemical industry structures, these technologies signal the future of energy in Houston and beyond. Adaptive reuse of buildings are designed to function passively, incorporating natural ventilation and daylight strategies and allowing the buildings to function as indoor/outdoor public spaces.

Sustainability



Native Prairie Restoration



Elevated walkway serves as alternative vantage point of performances

5,000 person open lawn, traffic controlled with slopes and planting

Proposed home of the Levitt Pavilion which will host dozens of free events for the community

1,000 foot tester wells can be sold as "VIP seating" and act as opportunities for microclimates, wayfinding, art, and lighting

Levitt Pavilion

Tony Marron Park







Option 2









The Play Shed with Sand Play Beyond











Entry Grove at the Event Shed



The Event Shed from the Event Lawn







The Event Shed Restroom



The BBQ Picnic Grove with Event Shed Beyond





Ed Pettitt II, MPH

**Friends of Columbia Tap
Founder and President
edpettitt@gmail.com**



COLUMBIA TAP RAIL-TRAIL · THIRD WARD, EADO, HOUSTON

Second Lives

What rail-trails and warehouses owe the neighborhoods around them



Five Lives, One Corridor: From Freight to Public Space



1850s–1950s

Freight tap

Chartered to move cotton and sugar out of the Brazos bottomlands to the Port of Houston, later a Southern Pacific line.



1950s–1980s

Industrial spine

Warehouses and docks are built facing the tracks. The corridor is the back door of every block it crosses.



1980s–2010s

Out of service

Rail traffic falls away and the right-of-way sits fenced and vacant for roughly two decades.



2010s–2020s

Public greenway

Four miles of paved trail link Third Ward to EaDo and downtown. The frontage reopens.



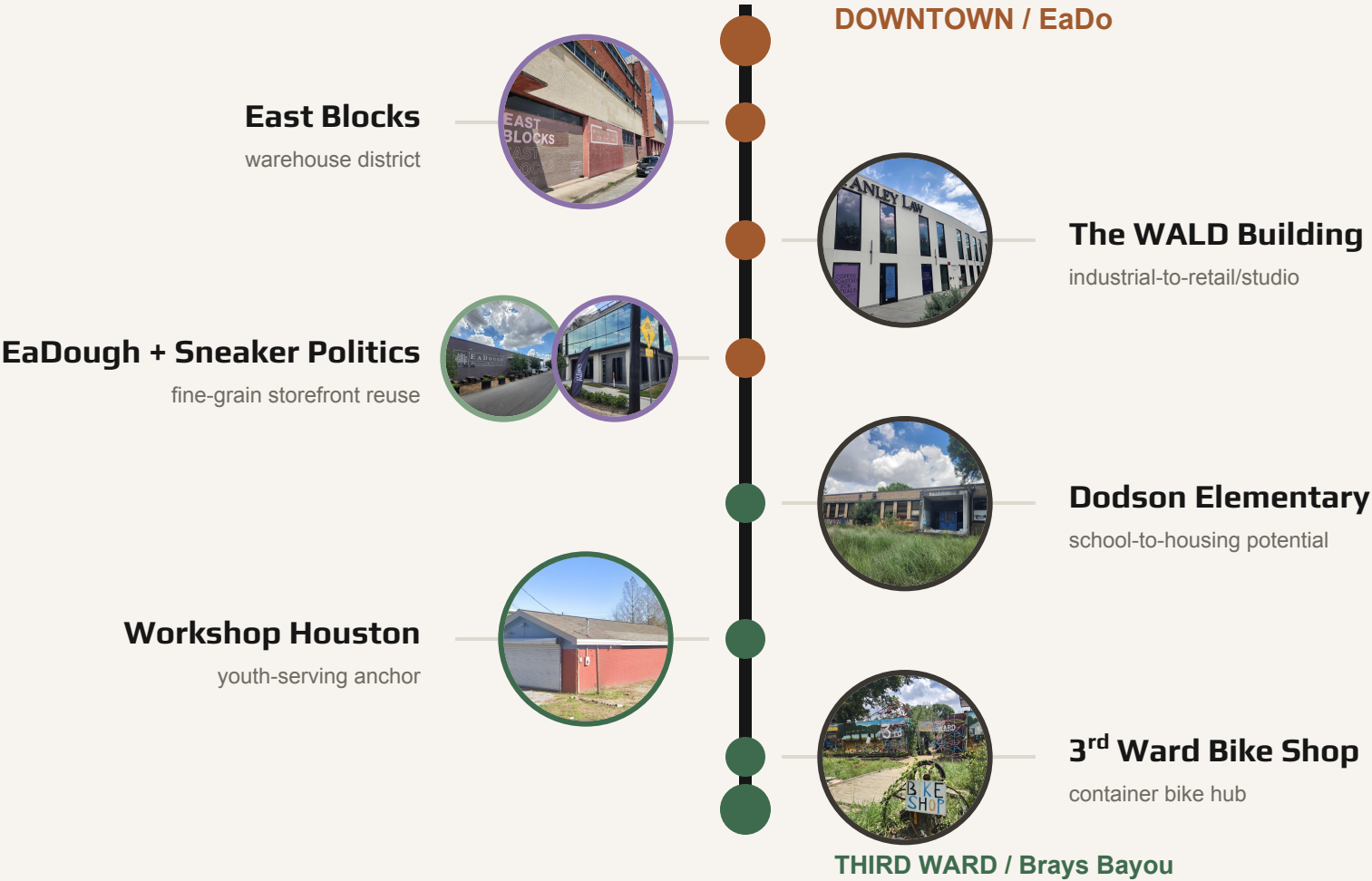
2020s–Now

Adaptive reuse

Owners turn rail-facing buildings toward the trail: bakeries, shops and studios take over the docks.

The reuse most often credited to developers happened first to the land: converting the right-of-way is what turned rail-facing loading docks into trail-facing storefronts.

One public spine triggered a second wave of reuse



The Test of Preservation Is Who Gets to Stay and Thrive



- Builds on the **1973 Third Ward Model City Plan** led by Mr. James Walker, the first plan to recommend that the Columbia Tap railroad become a linear park
- Designed, coordinated, and facilitated by the **Community Design Resource Center at the University of Houston** and the **Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice at Texas Southern University**

WORKSHOP PARTICIPATION

78

Workshop #1
participants

70

Workshop #2
participants

148

Total
participants

Two community workshops, co-facilitated with residents

THE FIVE-PART COVENANT

Preservation is the means. Shared benefit is the test.

1

STAY

Legacy residents can remain

2

OWN

Local ownership grows

3

EARN

Local businesses and
workers participate

4

BELONG

Culture remains visible and
welcome

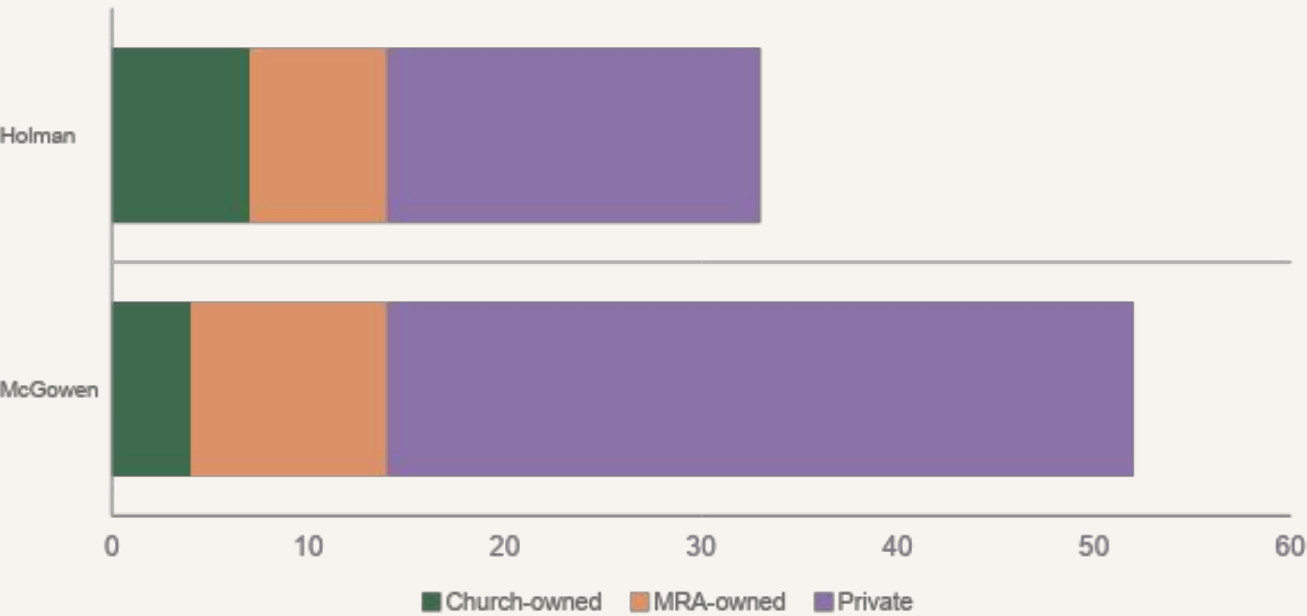
5

DECIDE

Residents shape use, design,
and metrics

Reuse is not scarce; access and control are

Vacant lots along the two priority corridors



85

VACANT LOTS

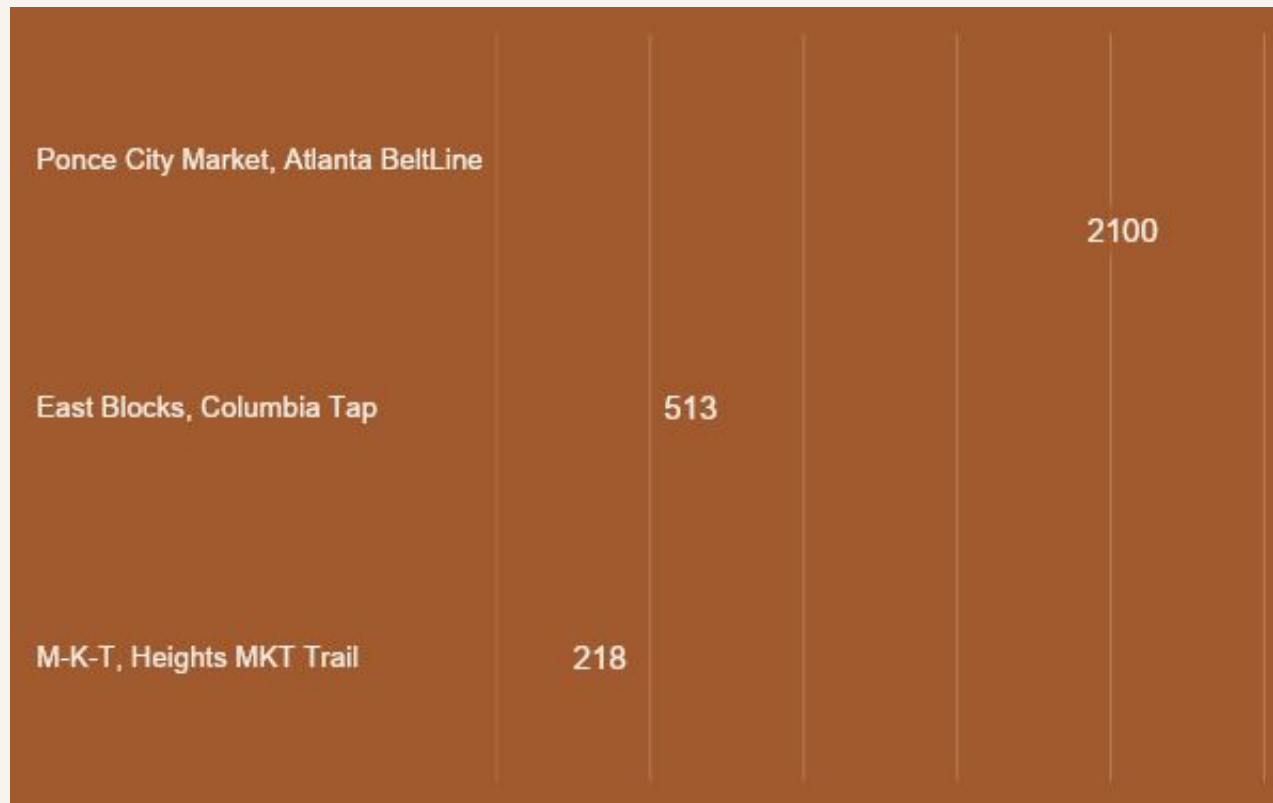
10

VACANT BUILDINGS



Every American rail-trail reuse project is measured against a 1926 Sears warehouse in Atlanta

Adaptive reuse projects on rail-trail corridors, gross floor area
Phase one where projects are phased



THE PATTERN, IN THREE MOVES

Trail first

Ponce City Market opened onto the BeltLine's Eastside Trail. The trail was the front door, and the loading docks became the retail edge.

Warehouses second

M-K-T took five 1970s warehouses on a decommissioned MKT line to 218,000 sq ft of retail, restaurant and office, with the Swift Building next door.

Districts third

Once one conversion leases up, the next assembles blocks rather than buildings. East Blocks is that stage on the Columbia Tap.

Source: Jamestown / Ponce City Market and Atlanta BeltLine disclosures; Triten Real Estate Partners M-K-T; Pagewood and Wile Interests East Blocks announcement, 2023. Areas rounded.

Shipping containers at 3616 Briley are the corridor's cheapest way in, and the most local

WHO OPERATES AT 3616 BRILEY

Tour de Hood

Community rides that use the corridor as a route, not a frontage. The trail is the program.

3rd Ward Bike Shop

Repair and resale at container scale. The service the trail creates demand for, run by the neighborhood the trail crosses.

300 sq ft per bay

Each container bay at 3616 Briley runs about 300 square feet, the smallest reuse footprint on the corridor.

Containers carry almost no debt and can move. That makes them the only tier a community operator can enter, and the first tier a rising land value pushes out.

Source: operator program materials and site observation, 3616 Briley Street.



Figure 3. Container bays at 3616 Briley Street house Tour de Hood and the 3rd Ward Bike Shop, about 300 sq ft each — reuse without a building.

Workshop Houston and Luckie's Pocket both turn reused buildings into workforce development and youth-oriented programming



CASE 1 · THIRD WARD

Workshop Houston

Reused warehouse campus, operating since 2004

Beat music recording and production

Style fashion, sewing, screen printing

Dance movement, performance, confidence

Media storytelling and digital tools



CASE 2 · EADO

Luckie's Pocket

1918 Charles W. Luckie School, 1004 Palmer St

Studios working space for resident artists

Learning youth creative programs with GONZO247

Gathering workshops, artist talks, festivals

Heritage Houston's first school named for a Black educator

Reuse succeeds when space is paired with programming, mentors, equipment, and pathways to paid work.

BEFORE



MARKET SIGNAL

The trail side starts to read as a destination, not a back door

A one-time sugar distribution center and car storage building at 815 St. Charles was bought below replacement cost, renovated fast, and reopened as retail and studio space.

AFTER



**33,000 sf of building on
20,000 sf of land**

Built c. 1927

Sources: Scarlet Capital project pages; Bisnow interview, January 2025.

East Blocks keeps 80-year-old warehouses standing, but 40% of phase one is parking

10

BLOCKS

513K

PHASE 1 SF

PHASE ONE PROGRAM, 513K SF



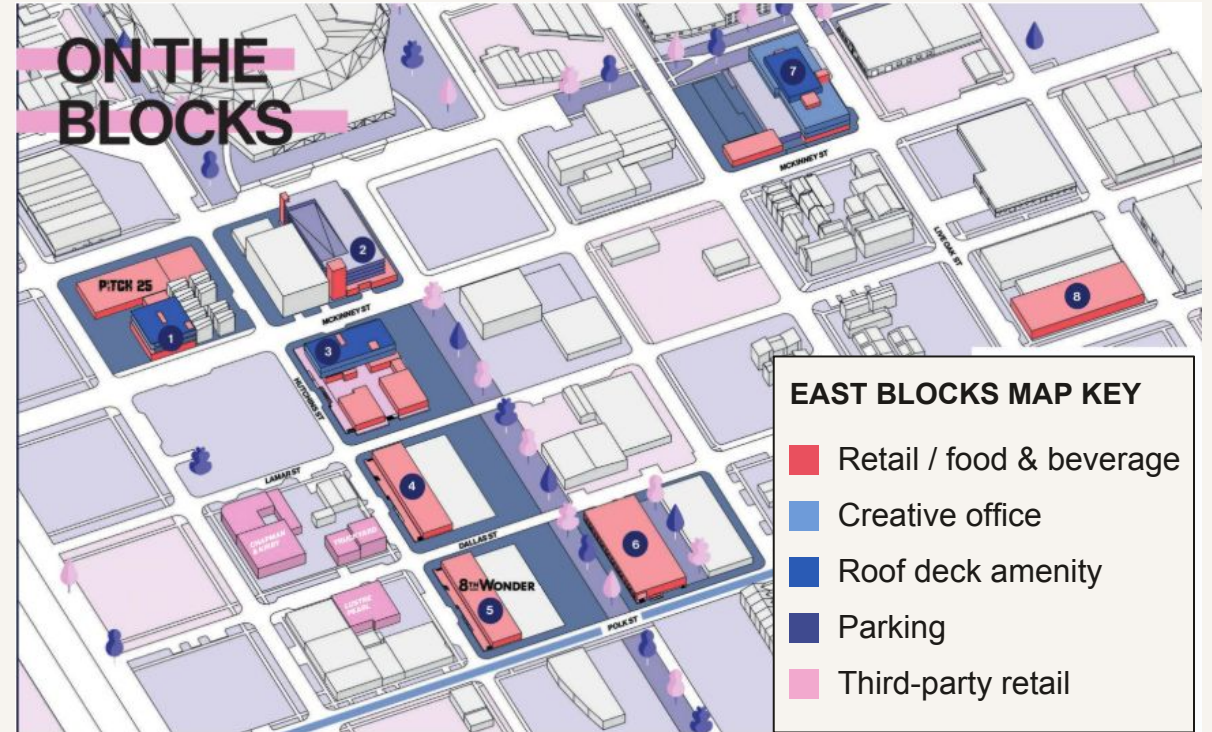
Retail + food 196K sf

Office 112K sf

Parking, ~650 spaces 205K sf

The neighborhood question

Phase one reuses eight 80-year-old warehouse shells, and its largest single use is a parking garage. How can a district this size keep storefronts affordable and programming public before redevelopment pushes rents up?



Phase one, East Blocks: eight retained warehouse buildings across ten blocks. Red marks retail and food; dark blue marks parking.

The tenants decide whether a converted warehouse reads as neighborhood or as destination

Two tenancy types now sharing the corridor's reused buildings



EaDough Pastries & Provisions

Warehouse to bakery

A food tenant in a converted bay. Opens early and prices moderate enough for a repeat local visit, which gives the trail a weekday-morning use in addition to a weekend one.



Sneaker Politics

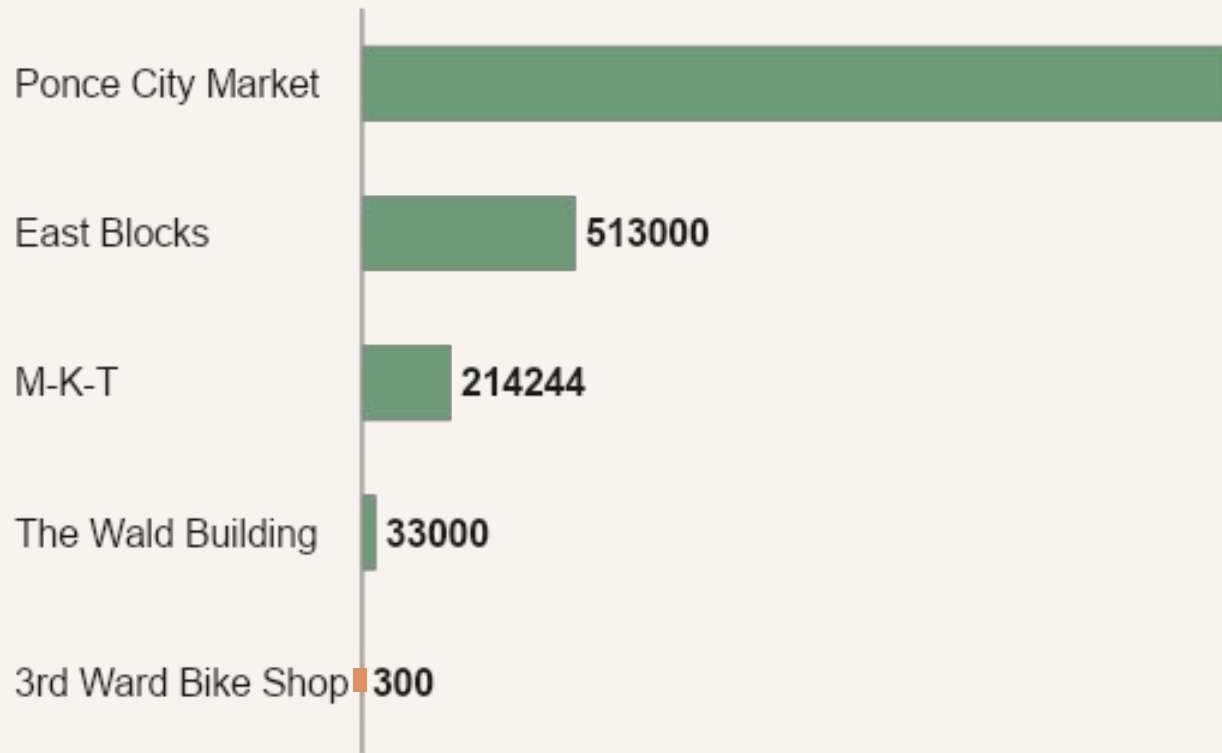
Whole building to specialty retail

The 1920 Bald Eagle Building, built for Minella Plumbing and Heating Supplies and known for the concrete eagle on its gable, redeveloped by Ancorian for a single regional-draw tenant.

Bay size, lease term and tenant improvement allowance decide who can occupy a reused building. Those three terms, not the architecture, determine whether reuse serves the neighborhood.

Reuse runs from 300 square feet to 2.1 million, but impact does not always track size

Gross project area, sq ft



At this scale the bike shop is a hairline: 300 sq ft against 2.1 million.



Big projects produce visible destinations.

Small projects can produce denser networks of trust, access, and local ownership.

A vacant 82,000 sq ft school can hold 77 homes

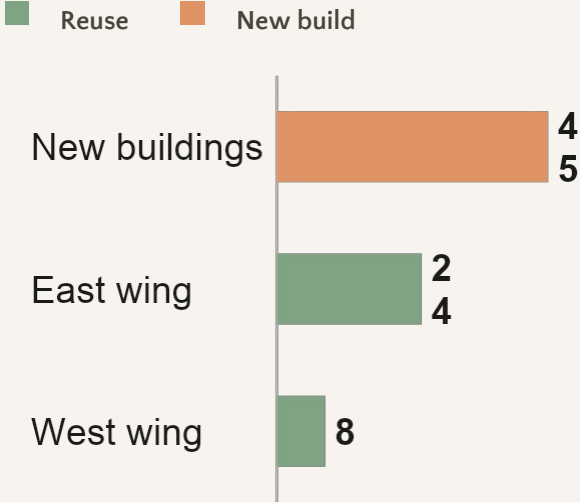


Today: Dodson sits vacant on a 7.7 acre site, one block from the trail and the new Hay Center.



Proposed: 32 homes, five studios, and a gallery in the existing wings, plus 45 new units on Velasco.

Proposed homes by building



South wing, gym, cafeteria, and library become studios, gallery, and shared space.

7.7

acres

Site area

82,000

sq ft

Existing school, 1–2 stories

32

homes

Inside the existing wings

45

homes

New buildings on Velasco

77

homes

Total across the site

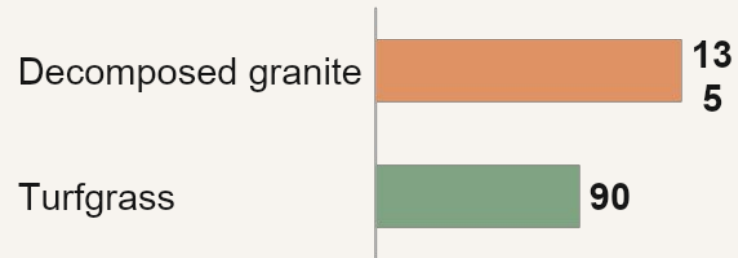
A 34-day World Cup conversion became permanent; the promenade should be restored



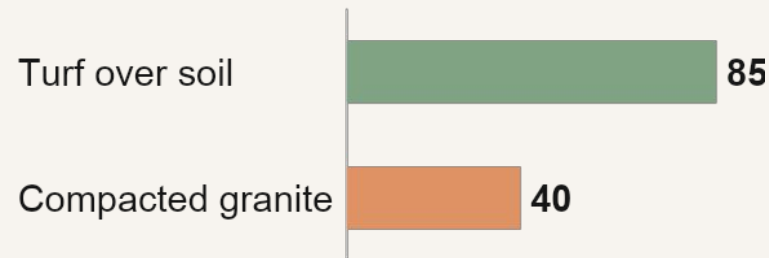
Community-provided before/after comparison. The image itself does not identify a date, photographer, or surface material.

What the swap costs

Peak surface temperature in full sun



Share of rainfall absorbed into the ground



1 EVERYDAY GREENWAY

Grass and mature shade trees made a former rail corridor usable between events.

2 34-DAY EVENT CONVERSION

Trees were removed and grass replaced with decomposed granite for the FIFA Fan Festival.

3 POST-EVENT DECISION

EDMD kept the granular surface, citing durability, drainage, and year-round markets.

Economic output was measured. Community benefit was not. Replanting grass and shade trees, under a resident-governed standard, is the repair.

GOVERNANCE GAP Eligibility is property-centered. None of the East Downtown Management District board members live in the district, and the public roster does not disclose resident representation. No paid FIFA lease was established.

Five commitments separate a trail-facing project from a trail-serving one

COMMITMENT

THE TEST TO WRITE INTO THE DEAL

1

A published corridor reuse inventory

A public list of the vacant lots and buildings on the two priority corridors, open to residents, not only to buyers.

2

Small bays at rents a local can pay

A fixed share of frontage in bays under 1,500 sq ft, at rents set for a local operator rather than a regional brand.

3

Community-benefit agreements, not press releases

Indoor space at below-market rent and the hiring terms, signed with residents and enforceable. A greenway is not a room.

4

Retention funding for legacy owners and tenants

Short lease terms, a real improvement allowance, and a fund that keeps legacy owners and tenants through the rent step-up.

5

Local procurement with paid training

A reserved share of contracts for local firms and a published local-hire share with paid training, reported annually.

SAVE THE DATE



Thank you

Join us at Friends to the Front, a summit on advancing Houston's parks and public spaces

WHEN

**October 16–17,
2026**

Friday full day, Saturday
half day

WHERE

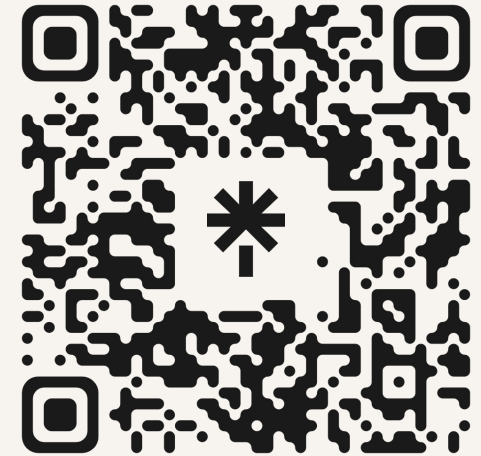
**Emancipation
Park**

Cultural Center, 3018
Emancipation Avenue,
Houston

COST

Free to attend

Breakfast, lunch, and
snacks both days



Scan for summit details

Hosted by Friends of Columbia Tap with the Emancipation Park Conservancy and Greater 3rd Ward Super Neighborhood 67.



Andrew Kaldis

Kaldis Development Interests
President & Developer
akaldis@kaldis.com

Kaldis Development Interests, Inc Presentation

- **Qualifying a commercial property for federal, historic, and state tax credits**
- **Process of securing federal and state tax credits**
- **Certification of the federal and state tax credits**
- **Five-year property hold**

Andrew Kaldis

Kaldis Development Interests Inc.

Mission Statement

“Specializing and redeveloping both traditional and historic commercial properties”

Kaldis Development Interests Inc.

Overview

- **Redevelop both historical and traditional commercial properties**
- **Committed to the development of successful and lasting relationships with our clients**
- **Committed to maximize returns for our investors / partners**

IRONWORKS MARKETPLACE

...Before



Development Process: Video

Development Process: Windows



Development Process: Containers



Development Process: The Hall

...Before



Development Process: The Hall

...Before



After...

IRONWORKS

711 MILBY ST. HOUSTON, TX 77023



Development Process: Containers

...After



Development Process: The Hall

...After



Development Process: The Hall

...After



Kaldis Development Interests, Inc

Thank You



Ruth Lohmer, AICP

**Freese and Nichols
Urban Planner**

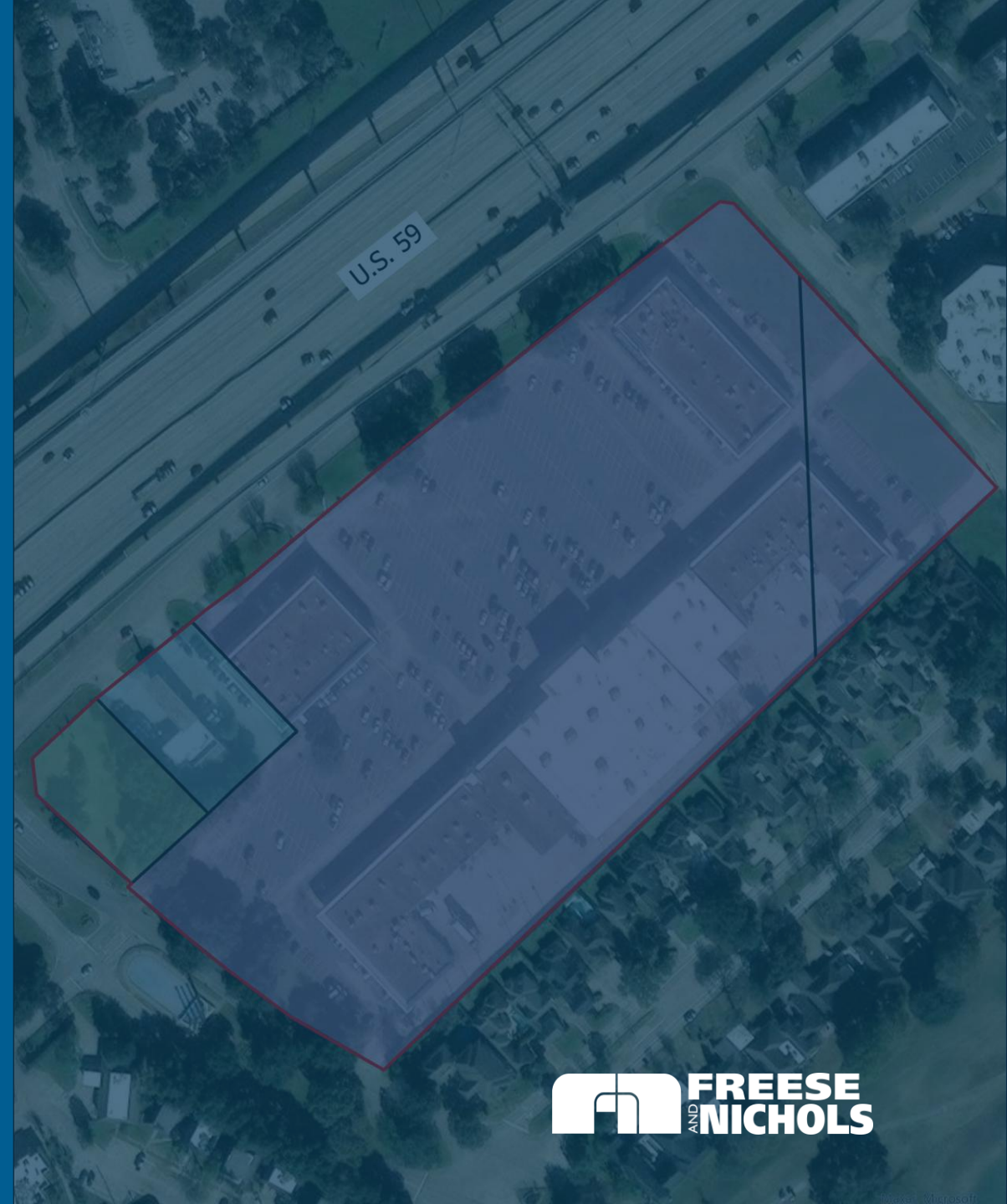
ruth.lohmer@freese.com

MAKING REUSE POSSIBLE

The role of local policy in adaptive reuse

Ruth Lohmer, AICP
Urban Planning Project Manager

Adaptive Communities | September 17, 2026



Ruth Lohmer, AICP | Urban Planning Project Manager, Freese and Nichols

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

EXPERIENCE

21 years in development, long-range, land use, and redevelopment planning

REDEVELOPMENT

Three years focused on redevelopment

LAKE POINTE

Authored first mixed-use zoning district

IMPERIAL

Led the historic district vision engagement

CREDENTIALS

AICP; MUP, Texas A&M University

Bridging vision and implementation: from policy to projects.

Adaptive Reuse Is A Systems Problem

THE MUNICIPAL LENS

A building can be reusable and still be trapped by the system around it.

MARKET

Can the new use
create enough
value?

SITE

Can access,
drainage,
utilities and
parking work?

CODE

Can compliance
preserve the
project
economics?

PROCESS

Can decisions be
timely and
predictable?

COMMUNITY

Does the use
reflect a shared
vision?

Municipal value: align the pieces early, then manage tradeoffs transparently.

Policy Stack: Enable Reuse Or Price It Out

WHERE CITIES INFLUENCE FEASIBILITY

LAND USE + DEVELOPMENT

- Use permissions
- Parking ratios
- Setbacks and buffers
- Nonconforming status
- Alternative compliance

BUILDING + INVESTMENT

- Building and fire code
- Stormwater and detention
- Public infrastructure
- Review sequence and timing
- Incentives and reimbursements

Four Ways Local Policy Facilitates Reuse

A PRACTICAL MUNICIPAL PLAYBOOK

01 MAKE THE VISION SPECIFIC

Define desired uses, form, connections, public spaces and transitions.

02 CREATE A PREDICTABLE PATH

Permit preferred reuse by right with clear criteria and sequencing.

03 CALIBRATE REQUIREMENTS

Use applicability matrices, phased compliance and alternative solutions.

04 CLOSE THE REAL GAP

Tie incentives and public improvements to extraordinary costs and public benefits.

Use Incentives to Buy Public Benefit, Not Private Value

CLOSING THE FEASIBILITY GAP

CITY CONTRIBUTION

Reimbursements
Fee relief
Infrastructure
Special districts

THE GAP

Extraordinary costs that
prevent an otherwise
viable reuse

PUBLIC RETURN

Preservation
Public access
Quality design
Catalytic investment

Fill a documented gap. Secure a defined public benefit.

Big and Small Change Over Time

SUPPORT INCREMENTAL ADAPTATION



LIGHT TOUCH

Temporary activation, tenant changes and public-space improvements



SELECTIVE CHANGE

Remove bays, add passages, diversify uses and reconnect the site



FULL TRANSFORMATION

Infill parking, add housing, streets and civic space

Write codes that allow a property to move along the spectrum over time.

Case Study: Blendin Coffee

VACANT BUILDING BECOMES COMMUNITY HUB



THE BUILDING

A vacant drive-thru bank with a footprint and site layout most new uses would walk away from.

THE CODE QUESTIONS

Nonconforming building setbacks and parking ratios the existing site could not meet under current standards.

THE CITY ROLE

Staff evaluated the standards creatively and weighed the community desire to see the building reused.

THE OUTCOME

Incremental reuse: an active local business in place, with no demolition or full redevelopment required.

Flexible evaluation of existing standards is what made this building reusable.

Case Study: Lake Pointe Green

CREATE THE RULES BEFORE REDEVELOPMENT ARRIVES

Former corporate campus

A major vacancy became an opportunity to rethink housing, mixed use, public space and connections.

VISION

Comprehensive
plan + concept

DISTRICT

First mixed-use
zoning
framework

REVIEW

Coordinated
staff, developer,
P&Z and Council
path

Policy certainty is an incentive.



Case Study: Imperial Historic District

PRESERVE IDENTITY WHILE CREATING A NEW DESTINATION



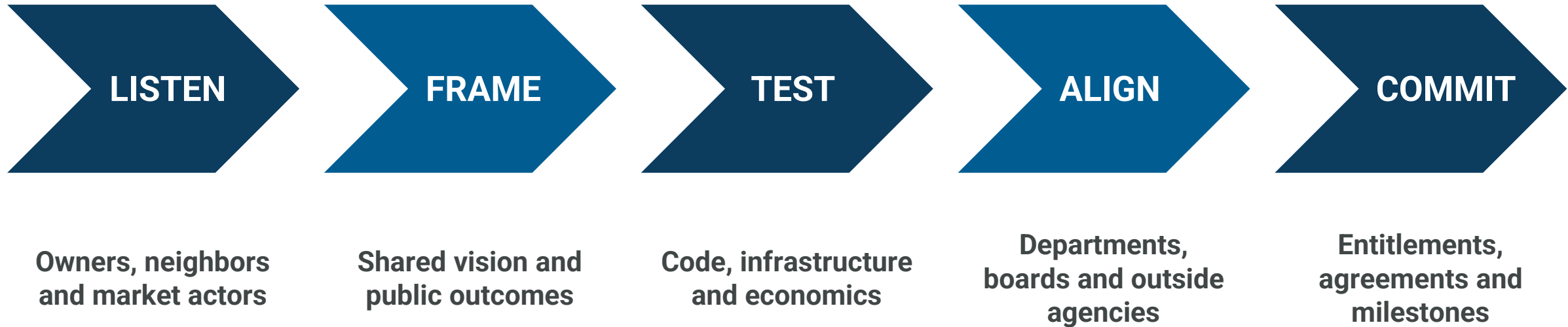
CITY ROLE

- Build a shared vision around a historic asset
- Engage residents, owners, officials and partners
- Coordinate preservation, infrastructure and development strategy
- Connect identity to implementation through public-private partnership

Alignment was the city's first deliverable.

City As Convener, Regulator And Investor

MOVING CONCEPT TOWARD REALITY



The handoffs matter as much as the tools.

Questions Local Governments Should Ask Now

- 01 **Where does our code assume a blank site?**
- 02 **Which desired projects still require discretionary workarounds?**
- 03 **Who owns cross-department coordination?**
- 04 **Can applicants get dependable answers early enough to price them?**
- 05 **Are incentives scaled to small and incremental projects?**
- 06 **What public value should we require in return?**

Good reuse policy means clearer intent, proportionate requirements and coordinated decisions.

THE MUNICIPAL TAKEAWAY

Reuse succeeds when cities align policy, process and partnership.

Set the vision. Clear the path. Calibrate the rules.
Invest for public value. Stay at the table.

Thank you

Ruth Lohmer, AICP | ruth.lohmer@freese.com

