



Funding & Public Benefit



There are several constraints that make preserving and reusing the Astrodome challenging. It is important to understand these constraints so that we can ensure that we propose a new use that will take these constraints into account and be a viable option for reuse. Funding and public benefit are two very important topics. Although they may not initially seem like they should be grouped together, for the Astrodome, they are intertwined and represent a very significant trade-off.

The Astrodome and NRG Park are owned, maintained, and operated by Harris County. The Dome currently costs Harris County money to maintain and operate, so the County wants a plan that will produce some revenue and provide more public benefit. It is important to the County that any public money that goes into the building be justified by public benefit. Public benefit can be defined as anything that has a positive effect on people and/or communities. It can include uses for things like arts, culture, charity, education, medicine, or science. The county will not help fund any reuse of the Astrodome that does not benefit the public in some way.

There have been lots of proposals for how to reuse the Dome since it closed in 2009, but many of them do not provide public benefit. There may be other, private sources of funding that could be secured to fund the reuse of the Dome. However, reusing the Dome for a private, profitable use - like a hotel for example - seems unlikely to work. Private uses require private owners and developers and financing, none of which have stepped up or shown any interest in reusing the Dome in the twelve years that it has sat vacant. For a private company or developer, reusing the Dome, especially with the Texans and Rodeo event restrictions (see "Events" fact sheet for more information about these restrictions), is not a financially sound investment without subsidy from public money. It is unlikely that the Astrodome will be sold to a private entity or developer, so focusing on reuses that benefit the public and can leverage limited public investment with private dollars is an ideal route forward.

To the right is a map of some of the amenities near the Astrodome, like parks, community center, libraries, museums, and amateur sport facilities that are open to the public in some capacity. Four Star and better hotels are also included. Understanding what amenities already exist can give better insight into what will be most useful for the immediate community in terms of public benefit.

