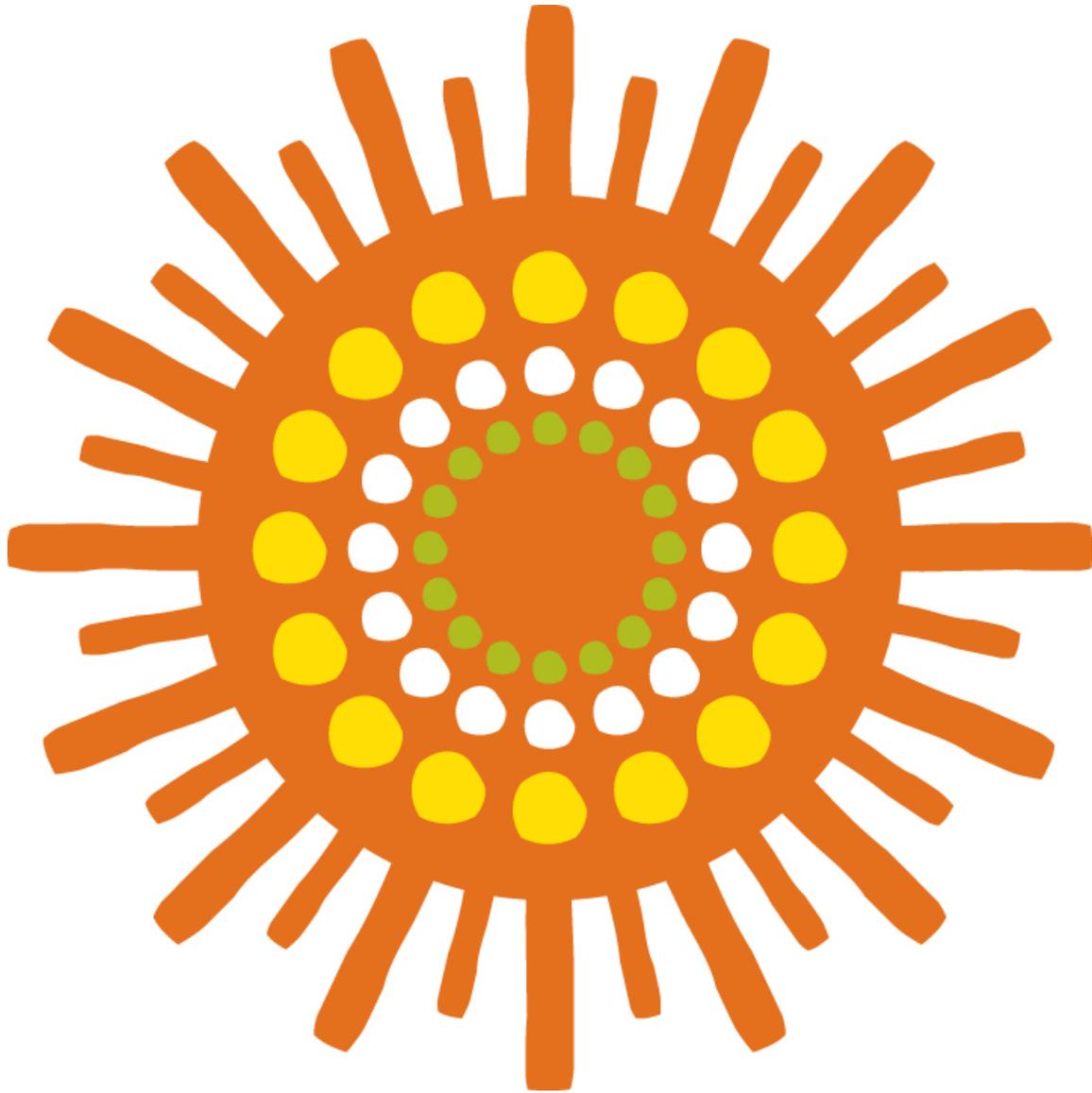


# Houston Aging in Place Innovations



## Interview Guide

# Houston Aging in Place Innovations Appreciative Inquiry Interview & Neighborhood Forum Guide

This document has everything you need to know to conduct an interview in preparation for HAPI's Appreciative Inquiry interviews & neighborhood forums. The figure below illustrates all the steps for undertaking your interviews - you can use it as a checklist if you would like to. Enjoy your interviews and the connections they strengthen... and thank you for your contribution to this effort!

## Table of Contents

**Preparing  
for the  
Interview**



**Conducting  
the Interview**



**Reporting  
the Interview**

<b>Purpose of the Interview</b>		<b>3</b>
	<i>Project Overview</i> .....	3
	<i>Your Role</i> .....	4
	<i>Conducting the Interviews &amp; Completing the Summary Form</i> .....	5
	<i>Interview Tips</i> .....	6
<b>Interview Questions</b>		<b>8</b>
	<i>Step One: Introduce Yourself and Your Purpose</i> .....	8
	<i>Step Two: Begin the Interview</i> .....	10
	<i>Step Three: Close the Interview</i> .....	12
<b>Reporting the Interview</b>		<b>14</b>
	<i>Interview Summary Form</i> .....	14

---

# Purpose of the Interview

---

## Project Overview

---

### Background

For our senior neighbors, there is tremendous value in the concept of "aging in place". The desire to remain independent, to be surrounded by familiar neighborhood sights and sounds and to be near friends and family is universal. Seniors also bring stability, resilience and a sense of history to our neighborhoods. Supporting their unique needs is vital to community strength, and more cost-effective than institutional care

The goal of Houston Aging in Place Innovations (HAPI) grant is for older adults to achieve their optimal individual levels of functioning and support needed to age in their home neighborhood comfortably. As part of the project we will be conducting hundreds of interviews and hosting a community forum in each of the three target Houston neighborhoods – Fifth Ward, Magnolia Park/East End and Sunnyside.

Approximately three years ago, Neighborhood Centers Inc. began to apply the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process to our work in communities and with individuals. This early exploration has resulted in the transformation of a number of processes within the agency that have allowed us to view ourselves and our clients from the perspective of what's right, what works, and how we can best build on our collective strengths.

We decided to use the AI process as the central method of assessing the capacities and assets of elders aging in place in low-income Houston neighborhoods for a number of reasons. As a strengths-based approach, AI is an elder-friendly way to engage people in taking a more active role in aging well. It appreciates older adults by viewing aging as another stage of life that offers opportunities along with challenges. Finally, AI encourages older adults to recognize their abilities and strengths as resources that can be used to improve their quality of life.

At Neighborhood Centers we believe that community development is dependent first and foremost on meaningful community engagement. Via Appreciative Inquiry we hope to build a consensus and commitment within the community around priorities and needs for seniors' ability to age in place. Neighborhood Centers' process for doing "appreciative" community development follows the 5-D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) – Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny. NCI has been engaging Houston neighborhoods in this process since 2005 and has completed hundreds of AI interviews and several follow-up summits and forums.

The purpose of the interviews and community forums is to:

1. engage community residents, service providers, businesses, churches, schools and others in conversations about creating communities that support aging in place;
2. identify neighborhood assets and gaps – including individual, organizational, and

community strengths that will form the foundation for building an elder-friendly neighborhood environment;

3. improve understanding of residents' preferences and needs;
4. determine current capacity for healthy aging and readiness to improve personal and neighborhood conditions; and
5. define neighborhood agendas to be facilitated by Elder Care Action Teams.

The success of this process depends in great measure on the openness and willingness of each person to share their strengths, their stories, and their aspirations through the interview process. We look forward to learning and growing through the information we gather in each and every interview.

This interview will be a little different from what you are probably used to – it will be asking about times when things were at their BEST. You may be more familiar with interviews that ask questions about things that aren't working well – the problems. In this case however, we are interested in finding out what seniors think is working really well so that we can identify what works well in communities and build upon those strengths.

Interview questions will follow this general structure:

1. What People Value Most in their Communities
2. High Point Successes, what communities and homes look like at their best specific to...
  - *Caring & Supportive Communities*
  - *Supportive and Helpful Providers*
  - *Aging with Pride*
3. Images of the Future

As part of this process we will look at:

- What are the core factors that engage communities and enable their success?
- What can we learn from the community's past experiences, especially when we examine closely those moments when they have been at their best?
- What are the most effective practices, strengths, or best qualities in these communities – things that we need to preserve no matter what else changes?
- What important lessons can we draw from the communities and their residents' experiences?
- What kind of change do we want to initiate in these communities to create a system of support that helps seniors to optimally age in place?
- What are the specific hopes and images of the community that is has of itself at its best in the future for aging seniors?

All comments from the interviews will be anonymous (not confidential); names will not be attached to any of the stories, suggestions, or examples.

## Your Role

---

The aim of this interview process is to invite responses from across both the community and external stakeholders. We want everyone to participate! Every voice is important.

How will that happen? You will be provided a list of names of community residents to interview.

As an interviewer, you will need to:

- 1) Contact your interviewee to schedule the interview and explain that each interview should take approximately one hour to complete.
- 2) Assure your interviewees that all comments are anonymous, but not confidential. In other words, stories and quotes will be shared, but no names will be attached to them.
- 3) After you complete your interviews, we ask that you capture the highlights and most compelling stories on the "Interview Summary Form" and submit them to Meggin Baxter (mbaxter@neighborhood-centers.org).

Please remember, as an interviewer your role is to guide the persons you interview through a series of questions that will generate their best thinking on our theme and topics.

We're counting on you to actively listen, engage with the story and the story teller, draw out specific details and examples, and be genuinely curious about the experiences that are shared with you.

## Conducting the Interviews & Completing the Summary Form

---

- Please use the space after each question for taking notes during the interviews. (Note-taking is usually very individualized, but you want to be able to recall your interview well enough to complete the summary form effectively.)
- It is ***strongly recommended*** that you summarize the interview immediately after the interview session. Use the attached "Interview Summary Form" at the end of this packet.
- ***Be sure to note your name, the date of the interview and the neighborhood on the summary page.***

Return interview summary forms to Meggin Baxter. As a guide to help us all stay on track, we request that interviews be completed according to the following schedule:

1/3 of all Interviews Completed by the end of February

2/3 of all Interviews Completed by the end of March

100% of all Interviews Completed by April 15<sup>th</sup>

**ALL Interviews Completed & Summary Forms Submitted by  
April 30th**

## Interview Tips

---

As an interviewer, your goal is to encourage a vivid and complete description of events and ideas. Encourage the person you are interviewing to tell a very descriptive and detailed story/vision/idea. Encourage expansion of the story's richness by asking clarifying questions such as:

- *Tell me more.*
- *Why was that important to you?*
- *How did that affect you?*
- *What was your contribution?*
- *How has it changed you?*

### Helpful Things to Remember:

- Let the interviewee tell his/her story.
- Use the interview question section for script guidelines and note-taking.
- Take notes and listen for great quotes and stories.
- Be genuinely curious about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings.
- Some people will take longer to think about their answers -- allow for silence.
- If somebody doesn't want to, or can't answer any of the interview questions, that's OK, let it go.
- The questions should be used as guidelines, you may choose to not use all the questions, or to adapt the questions to what you find works best for your interviews.
- Allow the interviewee to interpret whether the questions apply to work or to personal situations.

***Here are some additional elements that we all determined help to make an interview GREAT...***

- Showing interest and compassion
- Probing questions to dig deeper
- Surfacing the "why?"
- Acknowledging personal accomplishments
- Re-phrasing questions when needed to fit the person being interviewed
- Conducting interviews in warm, relaxing environments is ideal
- Respecting pauses – allow space for silence and reflection
- Being friendly, smile
- Showing excitement
- Actively listening with a spirit of wonder and curiosity
- Having fun!

## What to do with Negatives\*

With the introduction paragraph provided in the interview guide, you can generally get interviewees to identify things at their best. However, people should not feel like they do not have permission to talk about things that need fixing. There are several different ways to handle negatives.

**Postponing:** Say that you would like to make a note of what the person has said and come back to it later. When you get to the appropriate question that relates to their feedback, this is the time to discuss the “negative” data, having the interviewee reframe the negative into a positive vision.

**Listening:** If the person has some real intensity about problems, let him or her express it. If it is the major focus of the person’s energy, you are not going to get any positive data until she or he gets it out. Be careful not to get sucked into the negativity yourself and be sure to keep a caring and affirming spirit.

**Redirecting:** If the person is adamant about dealing with the negative, or if you have listened sufficiently to understand the negative issues being raised, find a way to guide the person back to the positive: “I think I understand a little bit about some of the problems you see (paraphrase a few of the ones you’ve heard), and now I would like to guide us back to looking at what is happening when things are working at their best. Can you think of a time, even the smallest moment, when you received support (for example) at its best?” If the person says it never happened in the community, find out if the person has had the experience of something working well in any other context.

**Using Negative Data:** Everything that people find wrong with a community represents an absence of something that they hold in their minds as an ideal. For example, if the interviewee says something like, “The transportation in this community is terrible,” say to them, “When you say that the transportation is terrible, it means that you have some image in your mind about what good transportation would look like. Can you describe that for me?” If the interviewee cannot reframe his or her statement into a positive image, use the negative information and reframe it yourself into a wish or vision statement and then confirm that statement with the interviewee.

*\*Adapted from Mohr, B.J., & Watkins, J.M. (2001). Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the speed of imagination. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Pheiffer.*

---

# Interview Questions

---

## Step One: Introduce Yourself and Your Purpose

---

I'm (name), thank you for meeting with me and participating in this process of gathering information from our residents across the community. These interviews are part of an effort to discover best practices, core strengths and hopes for the future, which will be used as input for a community forum we will host in this community in April. This process, including the forums, is designed to create a strategic plan for optimal aging in place that is created with the community consensus.

Before we start I would like to explain a little bit about what we are going to do because it may be a little *different* from what you are used to. I am going to ask questions about times when you, your home and your community were at it's BEST. You may be more familiar with interviews that ask questions about things that aren't working well – the problems – so we can “fix” them. In this case, we are going to find out about your home and the community at its best – the successes – so that, where applicable, they can be replicated and expanded upon throughout the community as we move into the future.

This *strength-based approach* has been widely researched and proven effective for a variety of applications and in just about every industry/sector imaginable. The end result of the interview will help us understand those positive factors or themes that will increase our vitality, effectiveness and success going into the future together. In order to surface these themes, the interview questions focus on areas that we believe are critically important to the successful design of our strategic directions:

- *Caring & Supportive Communities*
- *Supportive & Helpful Providers*
- *Aging with Pride*

This interview will take 45 minutes to one hour. Before we get started, is there anything you would like to ask or comment on?

Okay, let's begin.

## Step Two: Begin the Interview

---

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewer:

\_\_\_\_\_

Organizational Affiliation:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewee:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #1: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_ Male

Race or Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of interview if different from address above:

\_\_\_\_\_

What do you think of as your neighborhood, where you live, and what do you call it?

5<sup>th</sup> Ward

Magnolia Park/East End

Sunnyside

Other \_\_\_\_\_

***Caring Communities.*** Long-time residents of a neighborhood develop strong ties to their community by witnessing its growth and development. Over the years we have seen our neighbors work together and help one another in raising strong families, supporting local schools and businesses, improving the neighborhood and celebrating our achievements. Being a part of a community whose neighbors care and support one another gives us a sense of belonging and is a source of pride.

How long have you lived here? \_\_\_\_ years.

1. Why did you choose to live in this neighborhood?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What are some of the things that you value most about your neighborhood?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. As you think about the years you have lived in (*name of neighborhood*), tell me about a time when you were helped or supported by your neighbors and/or community.  
Prompts:
  - What happened?
  - Who was involved?
  - What was important about this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Which organizations, individuals and/or programs provide support and help make it possible for you to stay in your community as you grow older?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What wishes do you have for making your neighborhood the ideal place to live in the future?

***Home is where the heart is.*** As in most close relationships, we grow more attached to our home the longer we live in it. We also know that most people spend the rest of their lives in the home where they celebrate their 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. Our homes are associated with family and friends, a reliable reminder of good times and stability in our lives. Staying in our safe and secure homes as we grow older often makes it easier to adjust to changes in personal health, abilities, relationships and needs.

How long have you lived in your home? \_\_\_\_ years.

Do you  rent or  own your home?

1. Tell me about a time when being in your home made it easier for you to overcome a personal challenge that you faced.

Prompts:

- What was it about your home, or being in your home, that made a difference?
- Were there any particular programs, relationships or support networks helped make your home a good place for you during that time?

2. What do you value most about living in your home?

3. What qualities does your home have that makes it the best place for you to be living right now?

4. Thinking about the future, if you could design the perfect place to age (this could be your home or somewhere else), what would it look like?

Prompts:

- What features would it have?
- Who would be there?
- What services would be available?

***Aging with pride.*** As we grow older, we acquire valuable knowledge and skills that make us more self-sufficient, and the wisdom we've gained becomes an asset to family, friends and neighbors. We pave the way for others to follow and become respected 'neighborhood elders.' With advancing age, we also often experience changes in our personal health, abilities and relationships that may require us to seek assistance with activities of daily living, such as transportation and meal preparation. We expect this assistance to be delivered in a way that maintains our dignity and encourages independence and self-sufficiency.

1. Tell me about the best experience you've had receiving assistance with daily living activities (meal preparation, getting yourself ready, transportation). What made it so memorable? Who provided it?
2. What wishes do you have for living comfortably in the future?
3. What types of community or leisure activities would you be interested in participating in?

### **Step Three: Close the Interview**

---

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and your time. The information you shared today will be compiled with the responses from other interviews and used as a starting point for a community forum we are planning for April, which you will be invited to participate in.

---

# Reporting the Interview

---

## Interview Summary Form

---

Please summarize and report the information from your interview as soon as possible. *The more time that passes after the interview, the less information you will remember.* The purpose of this form is to ensure that the essence of your interviewee's responses are captured in a concise way that others can understand – please try to avoid reducing responses to one or two words. Thanks!

**Please complete the summary form and submit to Meggin Baxter by email  
mbaxter@neighborhood-centers.org**

Name of Interviewer (your name):

---

Date of Interview:

---

Interviewee's Neighborhood:

---

**What was the most "quotable quote" that came out of this interview?**

**What was the most compelling story that came out of this interview? (use as much space as you need)**

**Overall, what was your sense of what was most valued, most important to this individual?**

What were the 1–3 positive themes that stood out the most for you during the interview related to:

<i>Caring &amp; Supportive Communities for Aging</i>	<i>Helpful &amp; Supportive Service Providers</i>	<i>Safe and Livable Homes</i>	<i>Aging with Pride</i>
1)	1)	1)	1)
2)	2)	2)	2)
3)	3)	3)	3)

*List all service providers mentioned by interviewee:*

*Images of the Future*

1)

2)

3)

*Activities they are interested in:*