

# READERS' FORUM

What are your memories of the Astrodome? What are your suggestions for its future?

*Houston History* invites you to send us your reminiscences and to weigh in on the preservation of the building. We will include your comments in a future issue.

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**People from around the world knew the Astrodome in Houston as they knew the Empire State Building in New York, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, or the Pyramids in Egypt.**

The Astrodome was an instant international symbol built during a time when Houston's rapid growth led to its becoming the fourth largest city in America. While the engineering and sports impact of the Astrodome is significant, many consider it as important as the Alamo in terms of what it represents about the city and state.

The last major public event in the Astrodome

was a 2002 concert by country star George Strait, ending a thirty-six-year run for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in the domed stadium. National attention was brought to the Astrodome in 2005 when it served as a temporary shelter for thousands of evacuees from New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Since then it has remained mostly dormant, waiting for its new incarnation.

Ideas have surfaced to turn the historic stadium into a large hotel and entertainment complex. Another plan has the Astrodome



reconfigured into a large sound stage for film productions in Texas. Obtaining funding for these projects has been a difficult task, especially in today's economic climate. There were plans earlier this decade to convert the Astrodome into a world class track and field stadium in efforts to bring the 2012 Olympics to Houston.

While time continues to pass, another generation of Houston children is growing up with no memories of going to the Astrodome. Instead they see it as a relic of time passed as they walk past the aging stadium along the way

to a Texans football game or Rodeo Houston performance in Reliant Stadium. The massive steel dome still glitters on a sunny day but the inside of the Astrodome remains in shadow housing echoes of a million memories. One could wonder what the late Judge Roy Hofheinz would think of his creation and its current state of uncertainty. The Astrodome once again needs the original can-do spirit brought on so proudly by Hofheinz in the early 1960s. It is up to Houston and its current leaders to reclaim the "Eighth Wonder of the World."

– Mike Acosta, Houston Astros