WES TIDWELL

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EARLY CONCEPT · FIFTH WARD, HOUSTON

# Reel Row Houston

## Homes and a film training hub on Lyons Avenue, with Fifth Ward residents and Houston artists first in line.

Houston is building toward a working studio campus and a bigger film workforce by 2030. This concept asks whether a small housing and training base in the Fifth Ward can help local people get those jobs. It is inspired by Paducah, Kentucky, and by where Paducah fell short.

| $2M | $30M+ | $1.5B | 24 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Paducah's city investment | Private money it drew, by the city's count | Texas film incentives over 10 years | Homes in the first concept |

WHAT PADUCAH DID

### A small Kentucky town filled empty houses with artists

Starting in 2000, Paducah sold run-down LowerTown houses cheaply, and a local bank lent artists the full cost of buying and fixing them. More than 70 artists moved in, and the city says its roughly $2M drew over $30M in private money.

Where it fell short: gallery sales alone didn't pay the bills, and the number of working artists later thinned. This concept ties residents to training and paid production work instead.

WHY HOUSTON, WHY NOW

### Houston’s film push needs a local workforce

- Texas set aside $1.5B in film incentives over 10 years, starting in 2025.
- Houston First's five-year plan targets a working studio campus, recognized training programs and twice as many major productions by 2030.
- The Houston Film Commission estimates film's local economic impact roughly doubled this year, from $11.8M to $23.4M (January to August).
- Where crews and trainees live and learn is a gap worth testing with the people who know the neighborhood.

BUILDING ON WHAT'S HERE

### Fifth Ward’s arts district, built with the people already here

Lyons Avenue already has the DeLuxe Theater, Fifth Ward CRC's artist cottages and new affordable housing. Median household income in Greater Fifth Ward is $39.9K, against $60.4K citywide (2022). Any project here should add to that work, keep homes affordable for neighbors, and hire locally.

THE CONCEPT

## What could be built

### Homes for neighbors and artists

Two-bedroom live/work homes, two per lot, with Fifth Ward residents and Houston artists first in line.

### 6 rental homes

Held by a nonprofit or land trust for artist residencies and short-stay crew housing.

### Film training hub

Edit suites, a sound booth, a gear library and a training room, aimed at getting local people onto paid productions.

### Community ownership

A nonprofit side holds the rentals and the hub. Market-rate home sales are financed separately.

OPEN QUESTIONS

## What I'm working out first

- What Fifth Ward residents and organizations want on Lyons Avenue, before anything is designed.
- Which lots, and environmental screening near the Union Pacific rail yard site.
- A Houston builder partner with a track record, and home prices an appraisal will support.
- Who runs the training hub, and how it ties into Houston's film workforce programs.

ROUGH TIMELINE

**2027**
Listening sessions, partners, site study

**2028**
Design, land and financing, if partners are in

**2029 to 2030**
Target for first homes and the hub, depending on land

This is an early concept, not an offering. Figures about Paducah, Texas and Houston come from public sources; everything about Reel Row is a working idea to test with partners.

## I'd like your read on it

I'm a Houston construction-industry operator and filmmaker with a background in radio, TV and film. I'm talking first with Fifth Ward neighbors, Houston's film community, and housing and arts organizations.

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