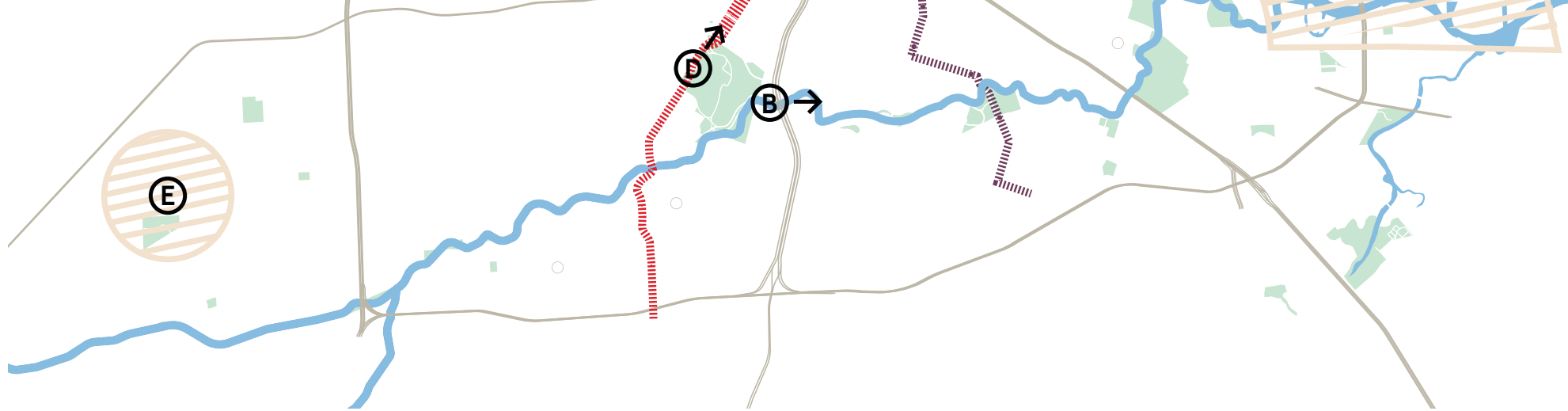

HOUSTON

Five Tours of Resilient Communities







(A) Houston Ship Channel

(D) Red Line

(B) Bayou Greenways

(E) Gulfton

(C) Third Ward

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The five tours of Houston presented here bring you into communities where residents, nonprofits, and funders are taking on seemingly impossible challenges of inequity and environmental justice. Their successes are drawing the attention of the nation and the world.

One reason for this attention is that Houston serves as an advance laboratory for solutions to issues the rest of the country will face. In a period of roughly 30 years, the Houston region changed from a predominantly biracial town of blacks and whites to a hyper-diverse mix of ethnicities—the most diverse U.S. city in terms of the spread across groups. According to Stephen Klineberg, founding director of the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University, this trend is unfolding in countless U.S. cities now and will continue to shape cities over the coming decades. In addition, the Houston region is a microcosm of national politics. It is a blue city with a black mayor in a purple county in a bright red state. Houston-based efforts that have navigated this demographic change and political context can serve as models for places learning to navigate such complexity.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, in his stump speeches, expresses pride in Houston's diversity while pushing for more:

“We keep talking about how diverse the city is, but let me tell you, unless that diversity is put into action and people feel a part of it, you can be diverse and yet be separate, segregated or apart. Or you can be diverse and be inclusive. In this city, each and every day we strive to be more inclusive.”

The mobile workshops will take you into Houston communities where residents, nonprofits, and funders are taking on the seemingly impossible challenges of social, economic and environmental inequities. For example:

In **Gulfton**, the Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative has brought together foundations, law schools, corporate firms, and nonprofits to pool resources for immigrants, refugees, and other newcomers.

In the **Third Ward**, Project Row Houses has become an international model for artists and architects working within communities, and for redevelopment on the terms of long-time residents by convening the Emancipation Economic Development Council.



Francis Street
Photo courtesy Project Row Houses

In the **Near Northside**, the GO Neighborhoods program began with a listening campaign and Quality of Life Agreement that has garnered unprecedented volunteerism, public investment, and inclusive growth.

Along **Lower Brays Bayou**, the Houston Parks Board has turned what was a dividing piece of infrastructure into a linear park that works to connect jobs, schools, and ethnicities.

Along the **Houston Ship Channel**, the Healthy Port Communities Coalition and the One Breath Partnership are bringing a new level of attention to environmental justice issues.

All these efforts have a common approach: They leverage public, private and philanthropic investment by combining community-based organizing, collaboration across multiple nonprofits, and proactive funder involvement. While public-private partnerships are not unique to Houston, the extent to which they are used here may have to do with the no-zoning context.

Houston is pushing the limits of its reliance on public-private partnerships and planning without a traditional zoning-enabled comprehensive plan. Can the success with its parks be repeated with affordable and workforce housing, environmental justice issues

in fenceline communities, and inclusive development of historically black and Latino neighborhoods? If not, Houston will be diverse but not inclusive. If the successes you will see on these tours can be replicated and expanded, then Houston will have demonstrated how to build an abundant future for the rest of the nation.

These mobile workshops were created in collaboration with the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities (TFN) and the Rice Design Alliance at Rice University, which seeks to broaden understanding of how design influences the built and natural environment. These mobile workshops will first be shared at TFN's 2018 Annual Conference here in Houston, an event co-chaired by Elizabeth Love, senior program officer of the Houston Endowment and Marilu Hastings, vice president, sustainability programs at The Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation.

The successes and opportunities for sustained improvement highlighted on these tours have broad resonance—not just for the residents of the City of Houston, but for funders, practitioners and others seeking to find solutions to some of society's most pressing issues. For this reason, these tours will be shared with a broad public by the Rice Design Alliance and its publication, *Cite*.

Raj Mankad

Editor, Cite: The Architecture and Design Review of Houston, Rice Design Alliance

Houston Ship Channel Tour

FENCELINE

COMMUNITIES



Houston Ship Channel *Photo by Alex MacLean*

“Galena Park has a small town atmosphere, close to all the big-city opportunities of Houston,” says Juan Flores, a long-time resident and former city council member of this small incorporated city that recently elected its first Latino leaders.



Juan Flores *Photo by Raj Mankad*

Up and down the Houston Ship Channel are small incorporated cities and neighborhoods of Houston with multi-generational communities. On this tour, you will see why these neighborhoods are treasured by residents. You will also see the environmental justice challenges they experience inside one of the world's largest petrochemical complexes along one of the nation's busiest ports.

Houston Endowment played a key role in convening and supporting new coalitions addressing these challenges. The Healthy Port Communities Coalition has brought together Air Alliance Houston, Coalition of Community Organizations, Public Citizen, and Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (t.e.j.a.s.) to “prevent pollution before it happens” by organizing local communities to advocate reduced idling of trucks, low- or zero-emission freight vehicles, isolated freight corridors, and bringing those communities' voices to decision-making tables.. Coupling community-based storytelling and science-based evidence, One Breath Partnership has convened agencies including Air Alliance Houston, Environment Texas, Environmental Defense Fund, Environmental Integrity Project, Public Citizen, and Rice University, in an effort to educate a broad public audience about the impact of air quality on their health.

Matching the political power of industry with the voices of residents is a challenge. U.S. citizens often belong to mixed-status families and may not advocate for their interests out of fear of current immigration policies. In addition, impacted Ship Channel communities also benefit from the industry.

“A lot people are afraid to speak up because they work in refineries — it is a double-edged sword,” notes Flores.

Residents and nonprofits have nonetheless mounted efforts through legal challenges, community organizing, elections, education, media outreach, and independent monitoring to improve the situation.

“If you aren't at the table, you are on the table,” says Reverend James Caldwell, founder of the Coalition of Community Organizations and a participant in the Healthy Port Communities Coalition. As the port expands, organizers are holding environmental justice trainings and engaging Port of Houston leadership in preventing pollution. Reverend Caldwell adds, “Change is inevitable but culture and identity doesn't have to be lost. A lot of the residents have been there 30, 40, or 50 years. Properties are handed down generationally. We will be persistent and consistent in making sure that officials are thinking in terms of individual lives not just profits.”

At the end of the tour, you will see where industrial sites are being repurposed to enhance quality of life by the Buffalo Bayou Partnership. As the award-winning park system along the bayou is extended to the east, the city, nonprofits, designers, and residents are reimagining this landscape in a way that is healthier and better connected to jobs, parks, schools, and nature while preserving community, culture, and industry.

Points of Interest

1. 610 Bridge *Sidney Sherman Bridge*

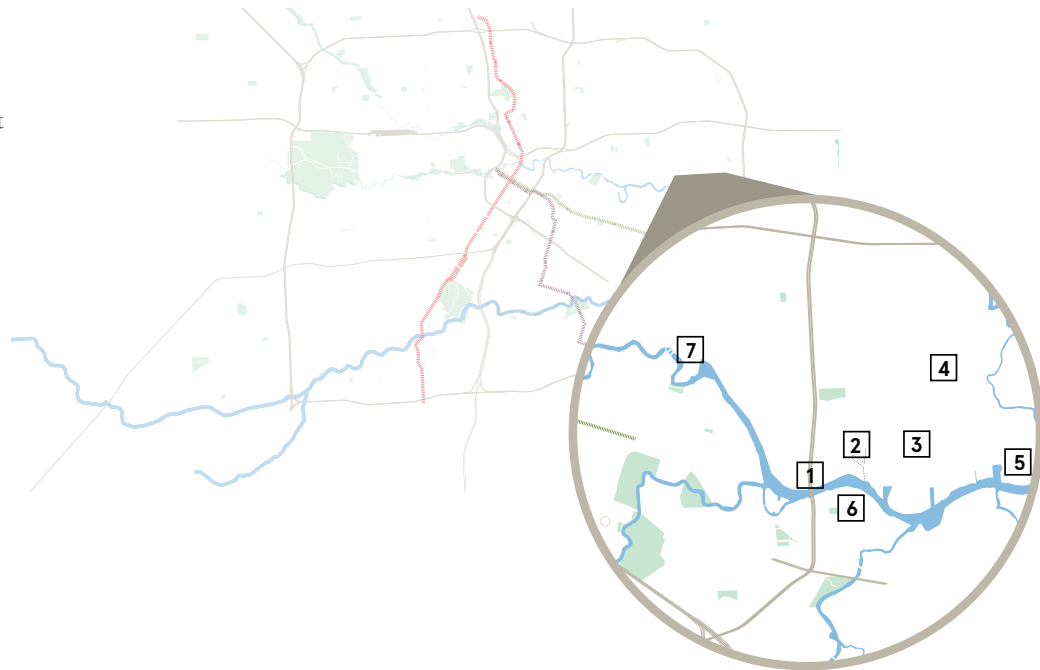
Most paths to the communities along the Ship Channel will take you over this bridge that gives you an unparalleled view above industry and residential neighborhoods along the channel. As long as you are not driving, look southeast beyond the Valero refinery and storage tanks for the oak trees lining the streets of Manchester.

2. Clinton Drive Monitor *9525 ½ Clinton Drive, Galena Park*

This ambient air monitoring station is owned and operated by the City of Houston as part of local efforts to bring about better enforcement of the federal Clean Air Act. One of the most comprehensive monitoring stations in the region, it samples for pollutants including ozone, particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5), SO₂, NO_x, CO, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). This site is in the historically African American side of Galena Park and is divided from the rest of the city by the train tracks to the east.

3. Taqueria Melissa's *2100 Clinton Drive, Galena Park*

This local business is a nice spot to refresh yourself and take in the mix of shops, churches, and restaurants in older strip malls, which may not look like a Main Street and city square, but serve a similar role.



4. Galena Park Sports Complex / Dredge Material Placement Area

1900 North Main Street, Galena Park

Adjacent to the Galena Park Sports Complex is a “Dredge Material Placement Area,” a dumpsite for potentially toxic material dredged from the Port of Houston by the Army Corps of Engineers. The Galena Park community does not know whether the site will grow in height as more and more potentially toxic materials are piled up.

5. Historic Santa Ana Capture Site *Pasadena*

The drive from Galena Park through the Washburn Tunnel will take you past a number of industrial sites and under the Ship Channel itself. On the other side is the historic site where General Santa Ana was captured bringing an end to the Texas Revolution in 1836. It is one of the most consequential places in North American history and one of the only publicly accessible places to see the Ship Channel up close. Next door to the east is Pasadena Refining, a 100-year-old refinery, with a troubled history.

6. Hartman Park and Community Center *9311 E. Avenue P, Manchester*

From beneath the generous shade of mature oak trees at this park, you can appreciate both the appeal of living in Manchester and the high level of industrial exposure residents face with massive infrastructure on all sides of the community. Children play on the tennis courts or kick around soccer balls with the Valero Refinery in the backdrop. Multiple sources of volatile organic compounds are nearby. According to a report by the Union of Concerned Scientists, the airborne concentration of 1,3-butadiene, which

causes cancer and a host of neurological issues, is more than 150 times greater in Manchester and neighboring Harrisburg than in West Oaks and Eldridge, relatively affluent neighborhoods on Houston’s west side. Since the mid-1990s, Juan and Ana Parras, co-founders of the Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (t.e.j.a.s.), have advocated for the health concerns of Manchester residents and other parts of the Houston region. Notice the mural painted on the community center showing an idyllic park scene framed by highways and refinery towers shooting flames.

7. Yolanda Black Navarro Bayou Bend Nature Park *2300 S Sgt Macario Garcia Drive*

Buffalo Bayou Partnership worked with governmental agencies to convert this abandoned industrial property into a park that opened in 2016. The landscape architects SWA and its consultants found that the disturbed soils, an “unnatural” mix of sand and clay, were ideal to introduce a “natural” wetland. Trails, ponds, a shade pavilion, and trails take advantage of old industrial detritus for walls, sculptural elements, and wildlife habitat. This site points to a complex future for areas along Buffalo Bayou and the Ship Channel. Community groups, nonprofits, and funders are not only working to mitigate serious environmental justice challenges but to substantially improve quality of life and manage growth in an inclusive way. Follow Navigation Boulevard to the west towards Downtown and you will see a mix of concrete crushing and metal recycling facilities, a new esplanade bursting with public art, and new luxury housing built in modest neighborhoods that have long welcomed immigrants from around the world.

Bayou Greenways Bike Tour

LESSONS IN
URBAN DESIGN ON
BRAYS BAYOU



Smither Park *Photo by Pete Molick*

“Our community’s cultivation of Brays Bayou’s natural beauty helps repair our damaged human-nature relationships. Through our shared outdoors appreciation Houstonians can better connect to enjoy the diversity in our different classes, races, and ethnicities,” says Carroll Parrott Blue, a public artist and community organizer in Houston’s OST-South Union neighborhood. “Houstonians consistently vote for bonds that improve our environment, especially the Bayou Greenways. This conscious caring for greening Houston can help clean up the toxic wastes in our air, earth and waterways that are increasingly exacerbated by the growing intensity in our natural disasters.”

Houston is in the midst of an effort to add linear parks along what will be 150 miles of equitably-distributed bayou corridors. Houston Endowment played a critical role in the concept's development by funding the Houston Parks Board to conduct a pilot project along Brays Bayou as well as master planning and initial implementation costs. With resulting data and proof of concept, former Mayor Annise Parker backed a bond measure for what became the Bayou Greenways 2020 effort. In 2012, a super-majority of Houstonians approved \$100 million in bond funding matched by over \$100 million in philanthropic support including a \$50 million gift from the Kinder Foundation.

When completed, Bayou Greenways 2020 will be one of the longest off-street hike-and-bike trail system in the nation, and planning is underway for “Beyond the Bayous,” which is a vision to extend connections into under-resourced neighborhoods to boost overall connectivity to jobs, schools, and parks. Bayou Greenways provides a model for public-private investment in a large-scale, equitable infrastructure.

Lower Brays Bayou is among the most complete and well-connected of the bayous, offering a taste of what is to come for more of Houston. The trail connects some of Houston's best parks; stitches together black, white and Latino neighborhoods including Riverside Terrace; and links major employment centers like the Texas Medical Center, University of Houston, and the Port of Houston. The Houston Parks Board has organized an annual “park to port” ride along this route with excellent background on its website that informed this guide.



Brays Bayou *Photo by Allyn West*

Points of Interest

1. Hermann Park

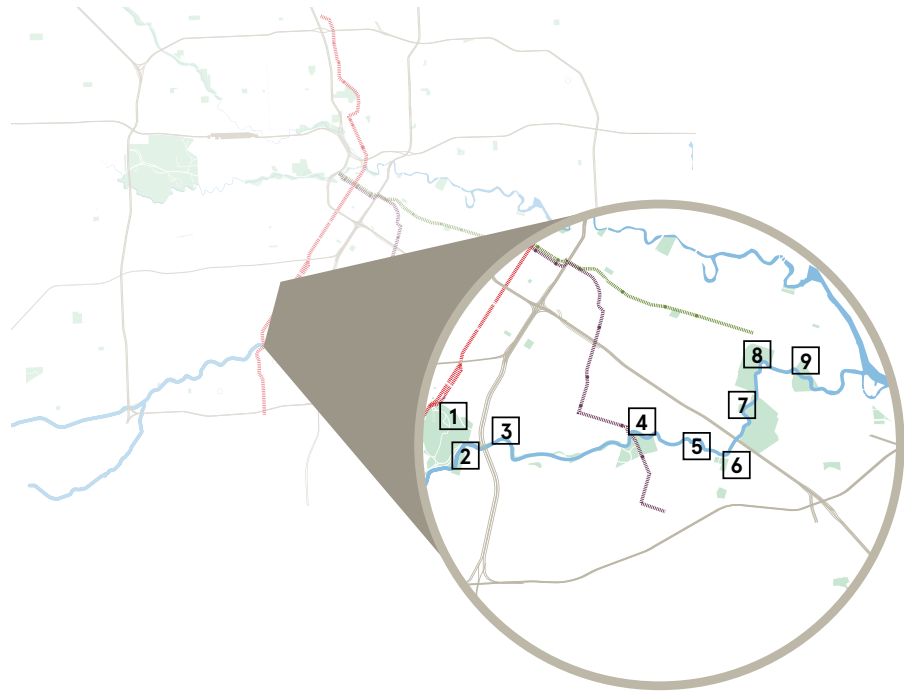
The first master plan for this 445-acre park was developed by George Kessler in 1916 and then Hare & Hare after 1923. Hermann Park is home to numerous cultural institutions, including the Houston Zoo, the Houston Museum of Natural Science, and one of the nation's earliest desegregated public golf courses. With funder support, the 1992 Heart of the Park design competition held by the Rice Design Alliance spurred renewed attention to the park after years of neglect, resulting in a Hanna/Olin master plan implemented by the Hermann Park Conservancy in time for the park's centennial with more than \$120 million in public and private funds.

2. Bill Coats Bridge

A contemporary suspension bridge completed in 2012. The bridge provides a key connection the Brays Bayou Greenway.

3. Columbia Tap

A rail right of way was converted to a bicycle path in 2009 and connects Brays Bayou to Texas Southern University, Third Ward, and Downtown. (Beyoncé's childhood home is nearby.) In 2017, Houston adopted a comprehensive Bike Plan that, if funded and implemented, will dramatically increase the number of dedicated bikeways on streets and off-street paths along utility right-of-ways and drainage infrastructure. Over the past three years, the nonprofit BikeHouston evolved from a



bicyclists' club to a credible advocacy organization with funding from Houston Endowment. BikeHouston played a key role in the adoption of the plan through impassioned outreach, education, and advocacy after a string of fatal bicycle-car collisions.

4. University Connections Bridge at MacGregor Park and University of Houston

This project received federal funding from a TIGER grant—secured with matching dollars from local funders—and provides a key link to students and nearby communities. The 83-acre MacGregor Park was developed in 1929 and linked to Hermann Park by landscaped roadways, built on either side of Brays Bayou. As the Houston Parks Board's "50 Super Places" notes, the park features a Mission Style community center, swimming pool, disc golf course, the ballpark of the Texas Southern University's baseball team, and a statue of the park's namesake, Peggy MacGregor, by Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor of Mount Rushmore.

5. Fonde Park Gateway, Orange Show, and Smither Park

The Orange Show was the creation of folk artist Jeff McKissack and includes over 3,000 square feet of outsider-style folk art—centered on the theme of oranges—including a wishing well, pond, and chimes. The adjacent Smither Park provides a venue for new mosaic artists, who can be seen working on Saturdays.

6. Gragg Park and Houston Parks and Recreation Department Building

The building was completed in 1957 and designed by MacKie & Kamrath, local proponents of Frank Lloyd Wright. It was the home for the Mercury Space Program from 1962 to 1964. It became the headquarters of the Houston Parks and Recreation Department in 1977.

7. Spurlock Park Gateway *6700 Park Lane*

In 2008, the Houston Parks Board partnered with the Idylwood community to complete renovations to Spurlock Park. The park expanded as a result of the acquisition of a former residential lot through the FEMA buyout program.

8. Gus Wortham Park Golf Course *7000 Capitol Street*

The golf course opened in 1908 as an 18-hole course and a restoration effort is underway.

9. Mason Park Wetlands Demonstration Site *541 S 75th Street*

The 104-acre Mason Park, which had its origins in 1928, includes a Spanish Mission-style community center, swimming pool, trails, hills and playing fields. In 2006, a series of ponds and wetlands were created as a 3.5-acre buffer—for flood and pollution control—between surrounding streets and the bayou.

Third Ward Walking Tour

EMANCIPATORY ART AND
EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT



Project Row Houses *Photo courtesy Project Row Houses*

“The Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC) is not just trying to make suggestions regarding the gentrification set to overwhelm the Northern Third Ward, we are remaking the process of gentrification itself,” says Dr. Assata Richards, a longtime resident of Third Ward and vice chair of the EEDC.



The path-breaking work of the EEDC goes back to Project Row Houses. In 1993, when seven visionary African American artists—James Bettison (1958-1997), Bert Long, Jr. (1940-2013), Jesse Lott, Rick Lowe, Floyd Newsum, Bert Samples, and George Smith—recognized real potential in a block and a half of derelict shotgun houses at the corner of Holman and Live Oak in a historic African American neighborhood called Third Ward, they didn't know how much their efforts would have ripple effects around the country and globe, inspiring generations of artists and arts organization to work within urban communities. Project Row Houses turned houses into spaces for art installations and used others as homes for young mothers. They incubated small businesses and other nonprofits, including a community development corporation.

In recent years, land prices have shot up. The neighborhood's proximity to Downtown attracts developers who build three-story, luxury townhouses. With substantial funder support, Emancipation Park reopened this year with new buildings designed by nationally-known architect Philip Freelon and a new conservancy to engage the adjacent communities. Long-term residents and institutions are seeking to manage these changes on their terms. Project Row Houses helped spur the Emancipation Economic Development Council, a coalition countering displacement through a robust community-led effort focused on affordable housing, economic development, cultural preservation, health, and social mobility that has been supported by funders such as the Surdna Foundation, Houston Endowment, and the Kinder Foundation.



The late Cleveland Turner aka Flower Man *Photo courtesy Rice Construct*

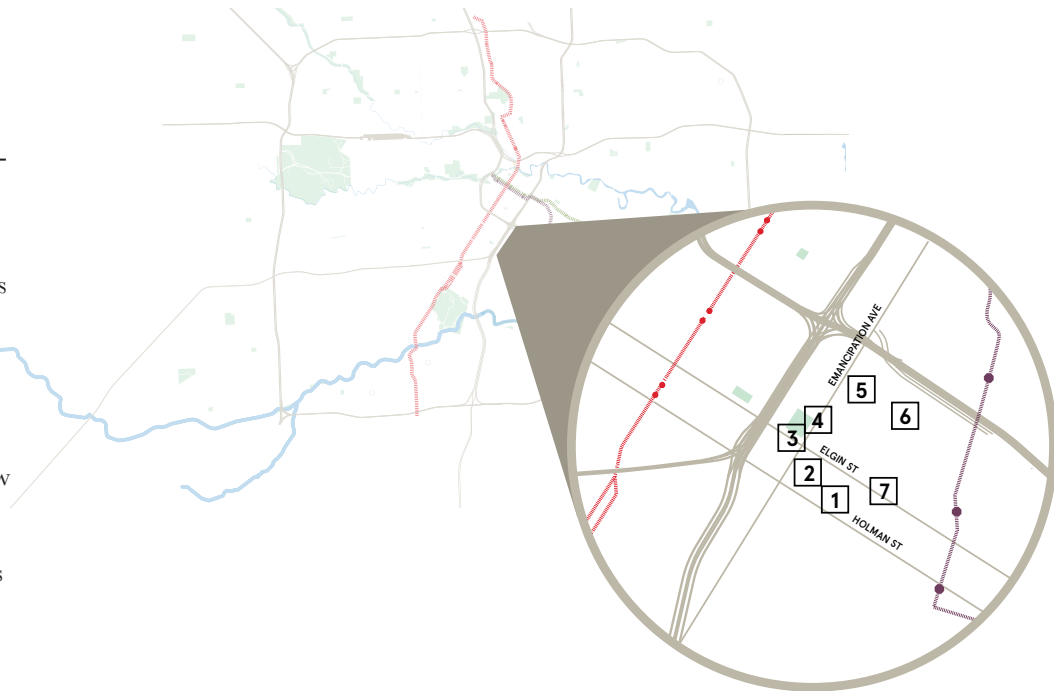
Points of Interest

1. Project Row Houses 2501 Holman Avenue

Two blocks of 22 cottages built in the 1930s as rental housing for African American families were renovated by volunteers with support from a number of local and national funders. Project Row Houses reserved some of the houses for art installations and others for housing in 1994. The repetition of the gabled house fronts echoes a series of paintings by John Biggers. In addition to this iconic image, notice the joining of interior and exterior, and the creation of shared spaces through front and back porches and joint backyard spaces. This spatial quality that encourages community is, perhaps, more important to preserving the character of the built environment in Third Ward than the specific form of row houses.

2. Francis Street Development

Project Row Houses and Rice Building Workshop collaborated to create a series of row house-inspired duplexes to provide affordable housing for people in the community. In 2003, Row House CDC was created to act as a sister organization of Project Row Houses to manage the affordable housing program. The two-story duplexes on Francis Street are iterations of a design developed by Rice Architecture students under the direction of Danny Samuels and Nonya Grenader, and take inspiration from the row house with generous porches and shared backyards.



3. Eldorado Ballroom *3206 Emancipation Avenue*

From 1939 to 1970, many music legends including Ray Charles, Bill Doggett, Guitar Slim, Etta James, Jimmy Reed, Big Joe Turner, and T-Bone Walker played in this streamlined, modernistic nightclub designed by Lenard Gabert. In 1999, the building was acquired by Project Row Houses and has been renovated over time. The first floor has served as an incubator for several nonprofits and business entrepreneurs. Be sure to visit NuWaters Co-op and buy some fresh fruit, tea, or books. Next door, indulge in a neon-pink Cookie Minaj from Crumbville, Texas.

4. Emancipation Park *3018 Emancipation Avenue*

The African American community purchased these 10 acres in 1972 as a place to celebrate Juneteenth, the anniversary of the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation in Texas. In 1916, it was donated to the City of Houston and became the first public park open to African Americans. A 1939 plan by Hare & Hare organized a swimming pool, community center, and other amenities around a central spine. A major remaking of the park, designed by Philip Freelon of Perkins+Will, was completed in 2017 after decades of community organizing with a mix of foundation, state, and local funds. A park conservancy, supported with substantial gifts from Houston Endowment and the Kinder Foundation, is bringing a heightened level of programming to re-engage the community.

5. Trinity East United Methodist Church *2418 McGowen Street*

This church established its Third Ward roots in 1909 and is playing a leading role in developing affordable housing options.

6. Blue Triangle Community Center *3005 McGowen Street*

This 1951 Y.W.C.A. building designed by Hiram A. Salisbury and Birdsall Briscoe offered access to an indoor swimming pool for the African American community. A roof leak has seriously jeopardized the John Biggers' 1953 mural "The Negro Woman in American Life and Education." Post-Harvey funding from the NEH, NEA, the Texas Historical Commission, and local foundations may pay for restoration of the painting and capacity-building for the Center.

7. Riverside General Hospital, formerly Houston Negro Hospital *3204 Ennis Street*

This community anchor, with buildings dating to 1926 (Hedrick & Gottlieb) and 1931 (Maurice J. Sullivan), has been vacant since 2014. The hospital provided access to healthcare and a nursing school to the black community. Its revival was identified as a priority by local elected officials, Third Ward residents, and Houston's healthcare community. Houston Endowment is working with community leaders and Harris County to reopen the site as a space for integrated health services for the Third Ward community.

A Trip Up the Red Line to the Near Northside:

HOUSTON IN TRANSITION



Photo by Alex MacLean

“After a lot of prayer, helping my old neighborhood became my mission,” says Stella Mireles-Walters, founder of Safe Walk Home Northside. She has just spent the morning of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with 35 other volunteers. They have picked up trash and created a temporary bicycle lane with tape and chalk at the intersection of Elysian and Hogan streets with the hope of spurring the city and county to make the change permanent.



Stella Mireles-Walters *Photo by Raj Mankad*

This “tactical urbanism” can be traced back to 2009, when Avenue CDC launched an intensive community building and engagement initiative. When plans for the extension of METRORail to the Northside were made public, funders, nonprofits, and community leaders made a concerted effort to plan ahead for the changes the light rail investment were expected to bring. Houston Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) worked with Avenue CDC to launch GO Neighborhoods. The initiative led to a “Quality of Life Agreement” that guided a series of funder-supported and community-led projects including new parks and community centers, repaired homes, facade improvements to commercial buildings, minimum lot size restrictions, affordable multi-family housing, festivals, and public art.

In 2016, an 11-year-old student named Josue Flores was murdered by an unidentified assailant while walking home in the Near Northside. The community demanded justice and changes to make their neighborhood safe. The robust civic club participation that GO Neighborhoods had developed for the past six years was able to channel that energy into a number of constructive actions including Safe Walk Home Northside, which is addressing safety in a comprehensive manner.

The cumulative effect of all GO Neighborhood’s parallel efforts is impressive. The transformation of the neighborhood is more evidently in line with the hopes and dreams of longtime residents than in other close-in neighborhoods of Houston.



Photos by Raj Mankad

A great way to visit the Near Northside and to understand the dynamism of Houston is by riding the 13-mile, north-south METRORail Red Line. In a city known for its orientation to the private automobile, billions of dollars have been invested in parks, housing, arts, and commercial development along rail. On the Red Line ride, you can see a glowing new campus at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; an innovative shared theater and exhibition space in Midtown; and luxury high-rise apartments in Downtown. The Near Northside’s proactive, funder-supported community organizing is all the more remarkable when seen in this context.

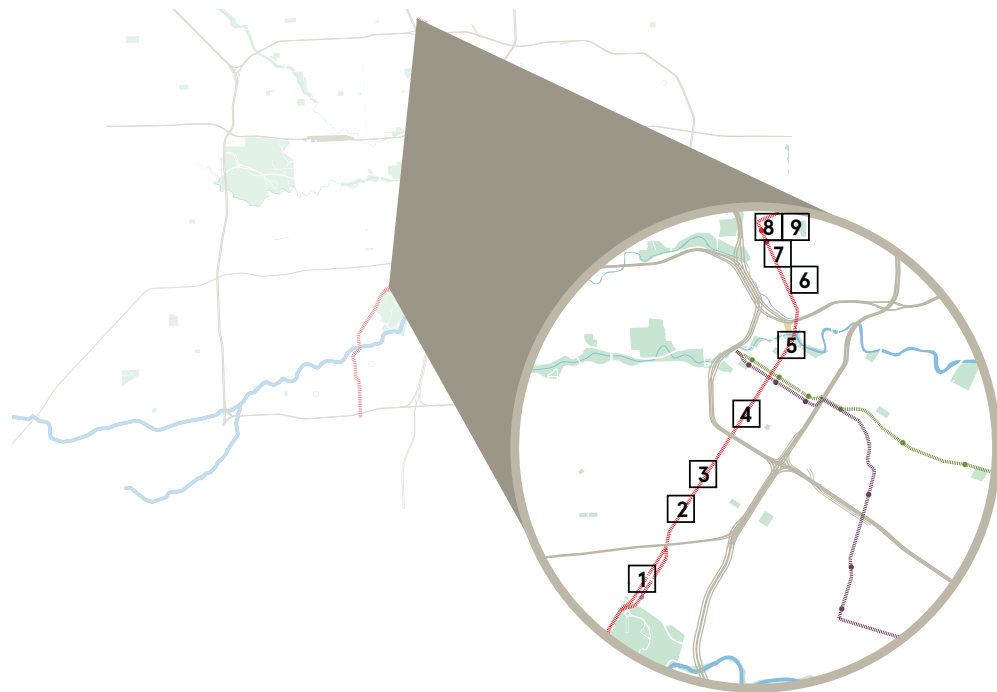
Points of Interest

1. Museum of Fine Arts, Houston *1001 Bissonnet Street*

A short walk from the Museum District Stop of the METROrail red line will give you a sense of the dramatic changes underway at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston that were master planned and designed by Steven Holl Architects. The nearly complete Glassell School of Art building sits atop an underground parking garage, allowing the L-shaped building to shape a plaza at street level. A sloping roof leads up to a public rooftop. Construction of the translucent and transparent Nancy and Rich Kinder Building has begun as well directly across from the Brown Pavilion designed by Mies van der Rohe and catty corner from the Audrey Jones Beck Building designed by Rafael Moneo.

2. Sears Roebuck & Company *4201 South Main Street*

The flagship Sears in Houston, a 1939 Art Deco building designed by Nimmons, Carr & Wright and later covered with metal siding, closed in 2017. The site is owned by Rice University and is adjacent to the Red Line's Wheeler Avenue Stop, and a highway that will be rebuilt below ground. The current highway underpass has been the site of a homeless encampment beset by crime and violence. The three parcels may be redeveloped in a coordinated manner to address several challenges at once, including Houston's ambition to create an "innovation corridor" and the city's need for equitable transit-oriented development. Through a multi-agency collaboration called the Way Home,



homeless counts have fallen; however, the city has struggled with its attempts to address conditions under the highways with policies that have been challenged in court.

3. Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston (MATCH) *3400 South Main Street*

This 2015 building designed by Lake | Flato and Studio RED organizes several theaters and an exhibition space around a central breezeway, which encourages interaction between different audiences and artists. With initial funding from Houston Endowment, this project resulted from years of planning by several small- and medium-sized arts organizations looking to share resources and enable growth. The spaces are rented at affordable rates.

4. Downtown Living Initiative Housing *1725 S Main St, Houston*

As the tour passes through Downtown Houston, notice the recent boom in housing construction along the rail line. Developers were given up to \$15,000 in tax rebates per-unit for homes and multifamily projects within the Downtown District, with no requirements for including a set percentage affordable or workforce units. The 5,000 unit cap for this program was reached relatively quickly as developers built luxury high-rises, including the SkyHouse and Block 334 buildings that can be seen from the train.

5. Sunset Coffee Building *1019 Commerce Street*

Between the Preston and University of Houston Downtown stop, you will see the most

intact historic district of Downtown. Harvey floodwaters damaged some buildings, whereas other buildings demonstrated resilience, including the early 1900s Sunset Coffee Building, rehabilitated with public and private funds in 2017 (Lake | Flato and BNIM) along Buffalo Bayou at Allen's Landing where Houston was founded. As the rail line passes University Houston Downtown, Buffalo Bayou, and freight rail tracks, you will have an elevated panoramic view of Houston.

6. Hardy Yards *901-999 Burnett Street*

The Southern Pacific Railway's Hardy Yards operated from 1887 to the early 2000s. A new mixed-use, mixed-income, high-density development (Steinberg Design Collaborative) is under construction at this site adjacent to a transit center and the Casa de Amigos Stop of the red line of METRORail. A neighborhood of Czechs, Germans, Syrians, and other immigrants grew around the rail yards and warehouses. After World War II, the area later came to be known as the Near Northside, and has a predominantly Latino population.

7. Avenue CDC Homeownership Center *707 Quitman Street*

This house, painted bright blue, is a nice match for the aspirations of Avenue CDC's clients. The organization helps clients of different income levels navigate the complexities of buying a home. It is also a nonprofit developer that leverages various types of financing, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, to build multi-family apartments

and single-family houses with a mix of affordable, workforce, and market-rate housing. In addition, Avenue CDC serves as the sponsor of the GO Neighborhoods program.

8. Kettelson Elementary SPARK Park *600 Quitman Street*

Once considered a drug haven, this site was rebuilt in 2012 as a park for the adjacent elementary during school hours, and it is open to the public during the daylight hours when school is out of session. This project was one of the first priorities for the GO Neighborhoods listening campaign and Quality of Life Agreement. The local SPARK Park program has worked with schools and neighborhoods to develop community parks on public school grounds for over 30 years. Now these small parks are being paired with big data. With funding from Houston Endowment, the Trust for Public Land piloted a tool that identifies where new park acquisition would have the greatest impact on park deserts. With funds from Houston Endowment, the Kinder Foundation, the Powell Foundation, and the City of Houston, the SPARK School Parks program will build 25 new SPARK parks over the next three years in identified park deserts.

9. Avenue Station *2010 N. Main Street*

This 68-unit apartment building built by Avenue CDC opened in 2016. It is another example of equitable-Transit Oriented Development that received Hurricane Ike disaster recovery money. Given the scale of flooding in the last three years, the disaster recovery funds expected to be available, and Mayor Sylvester Turner's aspirations for "Complete Communities," it seems possible that Houston is at a new turning point. The city may now finally have the funding and vision to address housing and transportation costs, redevelopment, and gentrification in a comprehensive manner.



Tactical Urbanism in Progress *Photo by Raj Mankad*

Gulfton Walking Tour

FIRST STOP FOR
HOUSTON'S IMMIGRANTS
AND REFUGEES



Celebration at 2010 opening of Baker-Ripley Center *Photo by Raj Mankad*

“Gulfton’s population is not monolithic—it includes refugees, undocumented, underdocumented, and mixed-status families,” says Kate Vickery, Executive Director of the Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative, a new model for bringing together funders, law schools, law firms, and nonprofits to pool resources and address the diverse but intersecting concerns of immigrant and refugee populations such as those in Gulfton. “With Hurricane Harvey, for example, the impact has played out differently for each group because refugees are eligible for FEMA funding while undocumented people are often afraid to try to access services.”

The neighborhood of Gulfton is Houston at its most diverse and densely populated. Apartment complexes built in the 1970s for “swingles” are now home to families of immigrants. Though it is nothing like the old Irish and Italian neighborhoods of New York and Boston in physical form, Gulfton contains many of the same joys and beauty of the urban, immigrant America of old. The streets are alive. Restaurants and markets with goods from around the world pack the strip malls. Gulfton is the international heart of Houston, a gateway between our city and the world.

This tour also shares the challenges that immigrants face in a blue city, red state environment. It describes the ways funders have actively organized and engaged to support this community in finding housing, getting kids into good schools, landing jobs, and securing healthcare and other services.



Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center (left); St Cloud Apartments (right) *Photo by Paul Hester*

Points of Interest

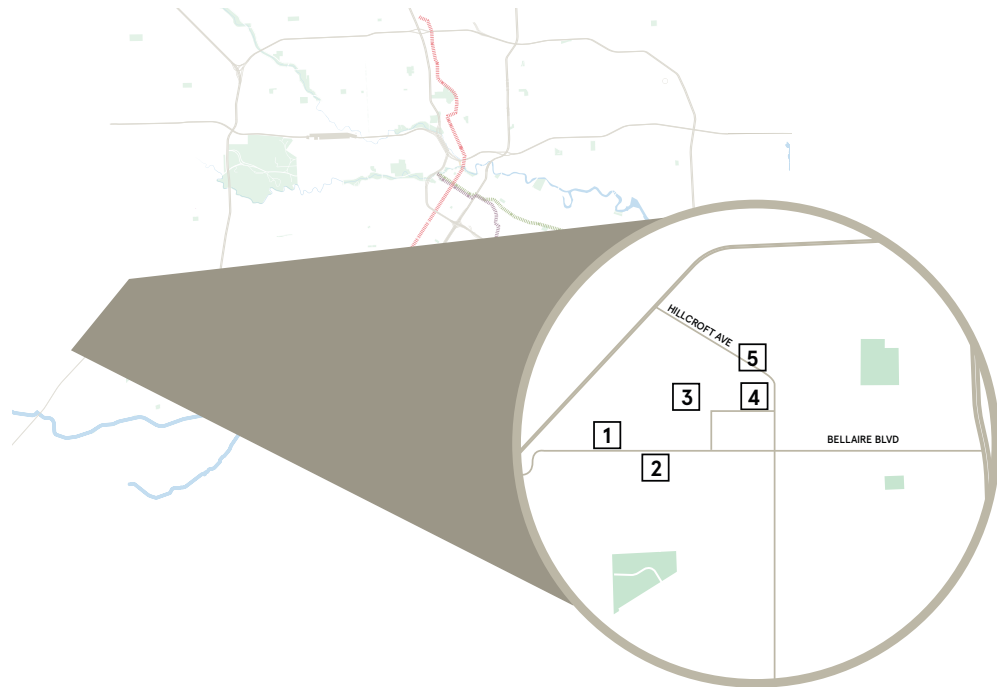
1. KIPP Connect Primary *6700 Bellaire Boulevard*

At the corner of Tarnef and De Moss streets, apartments, shops, places of worship, social services, and schools show how such an intense mix can work beautifully as well as go terribly wrong. Many residents of the area do not have a car and can access what they need on foot and by transit. St. Luke's Gethsemane has adapted its mission to serve the community around it. A mosque and halal market are down the street. KIPP, a charter school with a long waiting list, is across the street from a county health facility and a large conglomeration of apartments. But this high density and mixed uses for the land can have tragic consequences when proper planning and infrastructure are not in place. At this site, two years ago, four-year-old Muhammad Ali Abdullah was run over walking with his siblings to their first day of school. The tragedy occurred when the child stepped in front of a METRO bus parked at the corner as a parent pulled around it. Connect Community is working with the anchoring institutions to better coordinate services like school buses and to make the streets safe for children to walk.

2. Jane Long Academy and Las Américas Newcomers School

6501 Bellaire Boulevard

Las Américas Newcomers School is a model for a holistic approach to educating a large population of recent immigrants, including unaccompanied minors. The schools



sits alongside Jane Long Academy where there are more than 50 different languages that are spoken by students. The school welcomes immigrant families from Mexico and Central America, as well as refugees from all parts of the globe, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Ethiopia, Congo, and Nigeria.

3. Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center for Gulfton *Sharpstown, 6500 Rookin Street*
Neighborhood Centers Inc.—renamed Baker-Ripley in 2017—embarked on a groundbreaking, multiyear participatory planning and design process to develop the Baker-Ripley Neighborhood Center, a community center and marketplace serving the residents of Gulfton and the adjacent Sharpstown neighborhood. Since its opening in 2011, this Baker-Ripley site has served tens of thousands of people. They have learned English, many have become citizens, and others have gained the skills to start businesses. The four-acre site includes five buildings that shape the public spaces and create a “village” feel. Each of the five buildings has a different use: one focuses on education, another on art, another on business and entrepreneurial activities, another on recreation and related activities, and another on health care.

4. Alliance for Multicultural Services *6440 Hillcroft Street*

The offices of the Alliance bookend the corridor of nonprofits and community centers. The building from the late 1960s has a small Ethiopian market on the first floor and sweeping views of Gulfton from the wraparound balcony on the top floor where the Community Cloth collaborative has a sewing workshop. The building buzzes with former refugees accessing services, including a driving school.

5. Afghan Village *6413 Hillcroft Street*

A great place to take in the diversity of Hillcroft strip malls that are even more astonishing than the typical and still remarkable strip mall in Houston. Or try the Peruvian, Pakistani, Salvadoran, Cuban, or Ethiopian places nearby.

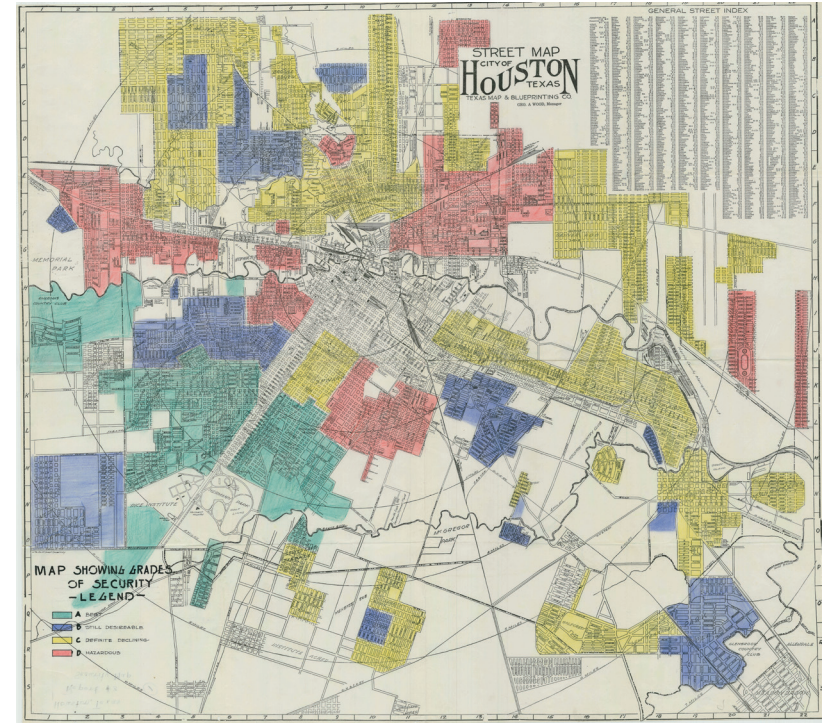
Context and Background

Below is a compressed history of Houston to provide context for understanding the tours.

Early History

Houston is not as flat as it appears. The eastern pine forests, western prairies, and coastal wetlands meet in a hyper-diverse landscape marked by shifting waterways. Over thousands of years, the bayous and rivers have carved subtle morphologies into the alluvial plain. When the water changes course, it can leave behind oxbows and “prairie-pothole-pimple-mound complexes” that are host to an astonishing range of flora and fauna.

The archaeological record stretches back 10,000 to 14,000 years. In 1542, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca published his account of surviving the 1527 expedition from Spain to the Gulf Coast, among the first historical records of this region. A powerful storm destroyed the expedition’s ships on or near Galveston Island. He survived by living among native peoples later known as Karankawa and Coahuiltecan. At times he was an itinerant medicine man, adapting to a broad range of customs, foodways, and spiritual practices. During the Spanish period, Texas was home to many different native peoples including the Caddo, Comanche, Apache, and Wichata. The work of activists, includ-



ing Juan Macias, Chairman of the Carrizo Comecrudo Tribe, points to the continuous presence of native peoples in this region.

By the early nineteenth century, what became the Houston region was home to a series of Anglo settlements along the coast, Galveston Bay, and Buffalo Bayou. In 1836, the Texian army defeated and captured General Santa Ana at the Battle of San Jacinto at a site now on the Houston Ship Channel. With Texas independence, slavery became legal. Unlike San Antonio, with its Mexican political and social structures that persisted after independence, Houston was a new predominantly white and black city.

The original siting of Houston in 1836 was at the confluence of White Oak and Buffalo bayous for its potential as a port. Roads, railroads, farms, cotton plantations, and urban developments radically reshaped a landscape already prone to floods. The city flourished as a hub for the financing, processing, and shipping of cotton. News of emancipation reached Texas on June 19, 1865, after which large numbers formerly enslaved people migrated to Houston where they and their descendents built Freedmen's Town, northern Third Ward, Independence Heights, and other communities.

Twentieth Century

After the 1901 Spindletop oil gusher near the Louisiana border, Houston parlayed its business expertise to attract the emergent oil industry. The Great Storm of 1900 that

The practice of “redlining,” or denying loans to certain areas of cities based, in part, on race, was institutionalized with the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) Residential Security Maps, including this one of Houston from the 1930s.

devastated Galveston also helped shifted the region's shipping and industry towards Houston.

In 1912, a study by Arthur Comey proposed that Houston's bayous and meadows should serve as a linear park system. Urban development, nature, parks, and flood management would work as a synthetic whole. The plan was partially implemented as Houston joined in the City Beautiful movement. Rice University, Hermann Park, and surrounding neighborhoods were organized around grand axes planted with oak trees. The Eastwood, Montrose, and Heights neighborhoods were built around streetcar service. The modern port opened in 1914 as one of the first public-private infrastructure projects in the nation. Immigrants from Germany and elsewhere settled on the east side of Houston for the proximity to industrial jobs along the port and Ship Channel.

The rise of the automobile and a series of catastrophic floods in the 1930s, as well as national trends and federal policies, led to a shift in approach to Houston's land use. Most bayous were transformed into concrete, trapezoidal ditches in an effort to speed water to the bay. The Addicks and Barker dams were built outside of town to hold back water from Buffalo Bayou. This infrastructure enabled Houston to grow deeper

and deeper into floodplains while turning its backs to the water. Streetcar rails were torn out and highways built with a disproportionate impact on African-American communities constrained by Jim Crow policy and “redlining” lending practices.

The scale of the industry along the Houston Ship Channel changed during and after World War II as refineries and chemical storage tanks began to tower over houses. From the 1970s onwards, new waves of immigration from Latin America changed the ethnic makeup of Ship Channel communities.

Twenty-First Century

As you tour Houston, you will notice juxtapositions rarely found in other cities. Along the Ship Channel, massive industry abuts small houses and soccer fields. In neighborhoods, houses become shops and churches turn into restaurants with little oversight from the city.

Indeed, one reason Houston garners national attention is for its lack of traditional zoning that would separate residential, commercial, and industrial uses. It is the only large U.S. city without a zoning ordinance, though not for lack of effort to establish one. Houston attempted to pass a comprehensive zoning law by referendum and failed five times in 1929, 1937, 1948, 1962, and 1993. In place of zoning, Houston has infrastructure plans for highways, transit, and flood management, plus a mish-mash of land-use restrictions like parking minimums, setback rules, requirements for elevation above the floodplain,

minimum lot size restrictions, deed restrictions, and other rules, often implemented at a block-by-block level.

After years of failed referendums or interventions by elected officials to stop approved plans for light rail, Houston locally funded construction of a line connecting the Texas Medical Center and Downtown that broke ground in 2001. The single line was extended north in 2013. In 2015, two light rail lines to the east were completed and the bus network was “reimagined,” increasing the frequency of key routes within the existing budget.

The massive flooding brought about by Hurricane Harvey led to a flood of articles in national outlets suggesting that the lack of zoning was responsible for Houston’s woes. The reality on the ground was complex. Well before Harvey, a series of paradigm shifts took place in the region’s flood management. In the late 1960s, oil wildcatter George Mitchell, U.S. Congressman George H.W. Bush, and environmentalist Terry Hershey stopped the concretization of Buffalo Bayou. Community activists, landscape architects, and new leadership at government agencies worked out a plan for Sims Bayou that treated it as a linear park and slowed water through a design that mimics the natural form of a river. After Tropical Storm Allison, hundreds of millions of dollars were invested in widening Brays Bayou, creating large detention basins, and buying out houses.

The Army Corps and Harris County Flood Control Districts, however, are not parks departments, and it took foundation-supported risk taking by Houston's nonprofit community to bring back the approach of the 1912 Comey plan. In 2012, one hundred years after a linear park system on the bayous was proposed, voters strongly backed a bond that matched philanthropic support for a continuous hike-and-bike trail system along major bayous, through communities of every class and background, called Bayou Greenways 2020.

In 2016, Houston received national attention for its “green transformation” as The Cultural Landscape Foundation brought visitors from around the country for a conference to study new investments in the city's parks and bayous. A city synonymous with sprawl, cars, and the oil industry, long the whipping boy of the urban planning world, will have half a dozen signature parks designed by internationally-known firms and built by public-private partnerships that have pieced together hundreds of millions of dollars in foundation, individual, corporate, and government support. Bayou Greenways and the remade signature parks represent not just better recreational opportunities but try to accomplish many goals at once.

On these tours, you may also notice what one architect described as a “stroboscopic effect.” Since its founding, Houston's development has been tied to the booms and

busts of commodities whether cotton, oil, or natural gas. New buildings come in waves followed by periods of relative quiet. The same is true of the population. For example, as mentioned above, when the domestic oil production collapsed in the early 1980s, the young professionals moved out of apartment complexes and immigrants from Vietnam, El Salvador, Eastern Europe, and elsewhere moved in. Houstonians generally celebrate their diversity, and Houston has made some gains in terms of equity, but the region remains fragmented economically, socially, racially and politically. Voter turnout is among lowest in the nation and, due to a quiltwork of jurisdictions and quasi-governmental districts, it is difficult for ordinary residents, not to mention experts, to understand how decisions are made here.

In a sense, parks are easy. All Houstonians seem to agree on their value and making better use of the bayous was always a great idea. Can Houston address its other challenges? The recent pension reforms passed by the city show that difficult and technical decisions are possible. Foundation support to the Kinder Institute at Rice University led to research that informed unions, a Democrat-led city, and a Republican-led state about possible courses of action. Houston voters, only two months after Hurricane Harvey, approved the bond at the heart of the compromise. An even greater collective effort is underway now after the existential threat laid bare by the storm itself, and, as these tours show, there's reason for optimism about a more resilient, equitable, and beautiful future for Houston.

