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Houston

Houston (/ˈhjuːstən/ ⓘ *HEW-stən*) is the most populous city in the U.S. state of Texas and in the Southern United States. Located in Southeast Texas near Galveston Bay and the Gulf of Mexico, it is the seat of Harris County, as well as the principal city of the Greater Houston metropolitan area, the fifth-most populous metropolitan statistical area in the United States and the second-most populous in Texas after Dallas–Fort Worth. With a population of 2,314,157 in 2023,[2] Houston is the fourth-most populous city in the United States after New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago, and the sixth-most populous city in North America. Houston is the southeast anchor of the greater megaregion known as the Texas Triangle.[8]

Comprising a land area of 640.4 square miles (1,659 km²),[9] Houston is the ninth-most expansive city in the United States (including consolidated city-counties). It is the largest city in the United States by total area whose government is not consolidated with a county, parish, or borough. Though primarily in Harris County, small portions of the city extend into Fort Bend and Montgomery counties, bordering other principal communities of Greater Houston such as Sugar Land and The Woodlands.

Houston was founded by land investors on August 30, 1836,[10] at the confluence of Buffalo Bayou and White Oak Bayou (a point now known as Allen's Landing) and incorporated as a city on June 5, 1837.[11][12] The city is named after former General Sam Houston, who was president of the Republic of Texas and had won Texas's independence from Mexico at the Battle of San Jacinto 25 miles (40 km) east of Allen's Landing.[12] After briefly serving as the capital of the Texas Republic in the late 1830s, Houston grew steadily into a regional trading center for the remainder of the 19th century.[13] The 20th century brought a convergence of economic factors that fueled rapid growth in Houston, including a burgeoning port and railroad industry, the decline of Galveston as Texas's primary port following a devastating 1900 hurricane, the subsequent construction of the Houston Ship Channel, and the Texas oil boom.[13] In the mid-20th century, Houston's economy diversified, as it became home to the Texas Medical Center—the world's largest concentration of healthcare and research institutions—and NASA's Johnson Space Center, home to the Mission Control Center.

Since the late 19th century, Houston's economy has had a broad industrial base in energy, manufacturing, aeronautics, and transportation. Leading in healthcare sectors and building oilfield equipment, Houston has the second-most *Fortune* 500 headquarters

Houston

City

Downtown Houston

Texas Medical Center

Sam Houston Monument

Uptown Houston

Johnson Space Center

Museum of Fine Arts

Flag

Seal

Nickname(s): Space City (official), more ...

of any U.S. municipality within its city limits.[14][15] The Port of Houston ranks first in the United States in international waterborne tonnage handled and second in total cargo tonnage handled.[16]

Nicknamed the "Bayou City", "Space City", "H-Town", and "the 713", Houston has become a global city, with strengths in culture, medicine, and research. The city's population comprises various ethnic and religious backgrounds, as well as a large and growing international community. Houston is the most diverse metropolitan area in Texas and has been described as the most racially and ethnically diverse major city in the U.S.[17][18] It is home to many cultural institutions and exhibits, such as the Houston Museum District and the Houston Theater District.[19]
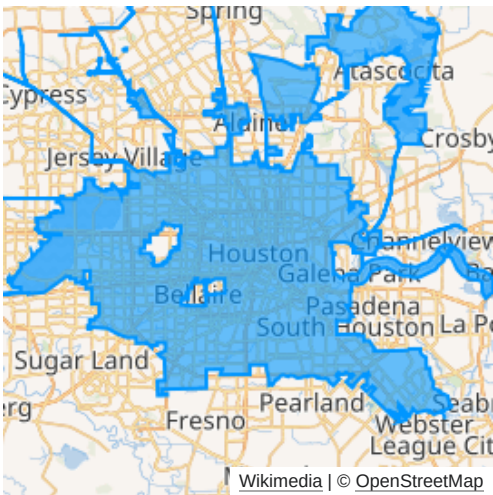
History

Present-day Houston sits on land that was once occupied by the Karankawa and the Atakapa indigenous peoples for at least 2,000 years before the first known settlers arrived.[20][21][22] These tribes are almost nonexistent today; this was most likely caused by foreign disease, and competition with various settler groups in the 18th and 19th centuries.[23] However, the land then remained largely uninhabited from the late 1700s until settlement in the 1830s.[24]

Early settlement to the 20th century

The Allen brothers—Augustus Chapman and John Kirby—explored town sites on Buffalo Bayou and Galveston Bay. According to historian David McComb, "[T]he brothers, on August 26, 1836, bought from Elizabeth E. Parrott, wife of T.F.L. Parrott and widow of John Austin, the south half of the lower league [2,214-acre (896 ha) tract] granted to her by her late husband. They paid $5,000 total, but only $1,000 of this in cash; notes made up the remainder." This was financed by assets inherited by Augustus's wife, Charlotte Baldwin Allen. [25]

The Allen brothers ran their first advertisement for Houston just four days later in the *Telegraph and Texas Register*, naming the notional town in honor of Sam Houston, who would become President later that year.[12] They successfully lobbied the Republic of Texas Congress to designate Houston as the temporary capital, agreeing to provide the new government with a state capitol building.[26] About a dozen persons resided in the town at the beginning of 1837, but that number grew to about 1,500 by the time the Texas Congress convened in Houston for the first time that May.[12] The Republic of Texas granted Houston incorporation on June 5, 1837, as James S. Holman became its first mayor.[12] In the same year, Houston became the county seat of Harrisburg County (now Harris County).[27]

In 1839, the Republic of Texas relocated its capital to Austin. The town suffered another setback that year when a yellow fever epidemic claimed about one life for every eight residents, yet it

Interactive map of Houston

Location in Texas
◉ Show map of Texas
○ Show map of the United States
○ Show all
Coordinates: 29°45′46″N 95°22′59″W

Country	United States
State	Texas
Counties	Harris, Fort Bend, Montgomery
Incorporated	June 5, 1837
Named for	Sam Houston
Government	
• **Type**	Strong mayor–council
• **Body**	Houston City Council
• **Mayor**	John Whitmire (D)
Area[1]	
• **City**	671.67 sq mi (1,740 km^2)
• **Land**	640.44 sq mi (1,658.73 km^2)
• **Water**	31.23 sq mi (80.89 km^2)
Elevation	80 ft (32 m)
Population (2020)[2]	
• **City**	2,301,572
• **Estimate** (2023)[2]	2,314,157
• **Rank**	6th in North America 4th in the United States 1st in Texas

persisted as a commercial center, forming a symbiosis with its Gulf Coast port, Galveston. Landlocked farmers brought their produce to Houston, using Buffalo Bayou to gain access to Galveston and the Gulf of Mexico. Houston merchants profited from selling staples to farmers and shipping the farmers' produce to Galveston.[12]

The great majority of enslaved people in Texas came with their owners from the older slave states. Sizable numbers, however, came through the domestic slave trade. New Orleans was the center of this trade in the Deep South, but slave dealers were in Houston. Thousands of enslaved black people lived near the city before the American Civil War. Many of them near the city worked on sugar and cotton plantations,[28] while most of those in the city limits had domestic and artisan jobs.[29]

In 1840, the community established a chamber of commerce, in part to promote shipping and navigation at the newly created port on Buffalo Bayou.[30]

• **Density**	3,613.38/sq mi (1,395.13/km^2)
• **Urban**[3]	5,853,575 (US: 5th)
• **Urban density**	3,339.8/sq mi (1,289.5/km^2)
• **Metro**[4]	7,122,240 (US: 5th)
Demonym	Houstonian
GDP[5]	
• **Metro**	$633.185 billion (2022)
Time zone	UTC−6 (CST)
• **Summer (DST)**	UTC−5 (CDT)
ZIP Codes	770xx, 772xx (P.O. Boxes)
Area codes	713, 281, 832, 346, 621
FIPS code	48-35000[6]
GNIS feature ID	1380948[7]
Website	www.houstontx.gov (https://www.houstontx.gov/)

Houston, c. 1873

By 1860, Houston had emerged as a commercial and railroad hub for the export of cotton.[27] Railroad spurs from the Texas inland converged in Houston, where they met rail lines to the ports of Galveston and Beaumont. During the American Civil War, Houston served as a headquarters for Confederate Major General John B. Magruder, who used the city as an organization point for the Battle of Galveston.[31] After the Civil War, Houston businessmen initiated efforts to widen the city's extensive system of bayous so the city could accept more commerce between Downtown and the nearby port of Galveston. By 1890, Houston was the railroad center of Texas.[32]

In 1900, after Galveston was struck by a devastating hurricane, efforts to make Houston into a viable deep-water port were accelerated.[33] The following year, the discovery of oil at the Spindletop oil field near Beaumont prompted the development of the Texas petroleum industry.[34] In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt approved a $1 million improvement project for the Houston Ship Channel. By 1910, the city's population had reached 78,800, almost doubling from a decade before. African Americans formed a large part of the city's population, numbering 23,929 people, which was nearly one-third of Houston's residents.[35]

President Woodrow Wilson opened the deep-water Port of Houston in 1914, seven years after digging began. By 1930, Houston had become Texas's most populous city and Harris County the most populous county.[36] In 1940, the U.S. Census Bureau reported Houston's population as 77.5% White and 22.4% black.[37]

World War II to the late 20th century

When World War II started, tonnage levels at the port decreased and shipping activities were suspended; however, the war did provide economic benefits for the city. Petrochemical refineries and manufacturing plants were constructed along the ship channel because of the demand for petroleum and synthetic rubber products by the defense industry during the war.[38] Ellington Field, initially built during World War I, was revitalized as an advanced training center for bombardiers and navigators.[39] The Brown Shipbuilding Company was founded in 1942 to build ships for the U.S. Navy during World War II. Due to the boom in defense jobs, thousands of new workers migrated to the city, both black, and white people competing for the higher-paying jobs. President Roosevelt had established a policy of nondiscrimination for defense contractors, and black people gained some opportunities, especially in shipbuilding, although not without resistance from white people and increasing social tensions that erupted into occasional violence. Economic gains of black people who entered defense industries continued in the postwar years.[40]