

= River Oaks , Houston =

River Oaks is a residential community located in the center of Houston , Texas , United States . Located within the 610 Loop and between Downtown and Uptown , the community spans 1 @, @ 100 acres (450 ha) . Established in the 1920s by brothers William and Michael Hogg , the community became a well @-@ publicized national model for community planning . River Oaks is the wealthiest and most expensive community in Texas and among the top ten in the United States . Real estate values in the community range from \$ 1 million to over \$ 20 million . River Oaks was also named the most expensive neighborhood in Houston in 2013 . The community is home to River Oaks Country Club , which includes a golf course designed by architect Donald Ross .

= = History = =

William and Michael Hogg , the sons of former Texas Governor Jim Hogg , and attorney Hugh Potter established River Oaks in the 1920s . Potter obtained an option to purchase 200 acres (81 ha) around the River Oaks Country Club in 1923 , and in the following year William Hogg established the Country Club Estates in order to support the development of the community . The two brothers promoted the sale of lots in the subdivision for \$ 2 @, @ 200 apiece in 1928 . The brothers , along with sister Ima Hogg , oversaw the construction of Bayou Bend , a stately southern @-@ style home on the banks of Buffalo Bayou .

The development plans ensured that River Oaks 's parks and esplanades were planted with oaks , shrubs , azaleas and other flowers . Every detail of the development was planned to establish a well @-@ integrated community . Advertised as a " distinguished experiment in fine living , " River Oaks became a national model for community planning . River Oaks ' planning standards , residential architecture , and landscape design were publicized during the 1920s and 1930s in national newspapers , real estate media and design journals . Deed restrictions at the time restricted home prices to over \$ 7 @, @ 000 and specified architectural styles , with a gentlemen 's agreement excluding blacks , Jews , and other minorities . Homes along Kirby Drive were restricted to American Colonial or English Tudor style architecture .

During the 1920s , River Oaks was so effectively organized , planned and restricted that it became the most expensive neighborhood in Houston . The City of Houston annexed the community in 1927 , adding 3 @, @ 465 acres (1 @, @ 402 ha) of land to the city limits . Bus service to Downtown Houston opened during the same year . After World War II , as Houston experienced its greatest growth , River Oaks became a haven for the wealthy of the city .

River Oaks has been the subject matter of scholarly studies , primarily because its significant contributions to Houston 's history and development as an elite suburban community . The community was the site of the 1972 murder of Dr. John Hill (later described in Thomas Thompson 's novel , Blood and Money) . River Oaks was the home of Jeff Skilling before he began serving a 25 @-@ year prison sentence for his involvement in the Enron scandal .

The River Oaks Garden Club Forum of Civics , located in Upper Kirby , is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the " Forum of Civics " on October 13 , 1988 . Formerly a county schoolhouse , the building is currently the administrative center for the River Oaks Garden Club .

In 2011 Bloomberg Businessweek ranked River Oaks as the seventh most expensive housing blocks in the United States .

= = Geography = =

Located within the 610 Loop and between Downtown and Uptown , River Oaks spans 1 @, @ 100 acres (450 ha) . The community is located in a region bounded on the north by Buffalo Bayou , on the east by South Shepherd Drive , on the west by Willowick Road , and on the south by Westheimer Road . River Oaks is located northeast of Uptown , north of the Upper Kirby district , west of Neartown , and is near to the freeway system and many major thoroughfares such as Westheimer Road , Kirby Drive and San Felipe Street .

River Oaks Boulevard , a road that runs through the center of the community , is lined on both sides by mansions and estates located away from the street . The two square mile (5 @. @ 2 m2) area of the subdivision comprises approximately 1 @, @ 600 homes , mostly detached single family homes . In 1990 , the Houston Chronicle said that " [t] he grandest streets are probably River Oaks Boulevard and Lazy Lane . Some of the houses are monstrosities , but many show taste and grace and also have lovely gardens . "

= = Demographics = =

River Oaks is within the Houston Super Neighborhood # 23 Afton Oaks / River Oaks , a division of the City of Houston that includes River Oaks and some surrounding subdivisions . In 2000 the neighborhood had 14 @, @ 313 residents ; 12 @, @ 273 of them (85 @. @ 7 %) were White , 1 @, @ 160 (8 @. @ 1 %) were Hispanic , 390 (2 @. @ 7 %) were Asian , 247 (1 @. @ 7 %) were Black , 18 were Native American , 13 were Native Hawaiian , and 23 were Others . 189 people were of two or more races .

According to the United States census in 2000 , of the 12 @, @ 088 residents over 18 years of age , 10 @, @ 390 (86 @. @ 0 %) were White , 945 (7 @. @ 8 %) were Hispanic , 353 (2 @. @ 9 %) were Asian , 205 (1 @. @ 7 %) were Black , 17 were Native American , 8 were Native Hawaiian , and 22 were Other . 148 were of two or more races .

The neighborhood had 8 @, @ 169 housing units . Of the 7 @, @ 401 occupied units , 3 @, @ 573 were rental units and 3 @, @ 828 were owner units . The Super Neighborhood had 3 @, @ 518 families with a total of 9 @, @ 521 individuals . River Oaks Super Neighborhood had a lower average family size than the average City of Houston family size . The River Oaks average was 2 @. @ 7 , while the city average was 3 @. @ 4 .

River Oaks is one of the wealthiest communities in Texas and the United States . Residents are predominantly successful professionals , and real estate values range from \$ 1 million to over \$ 20 million .

= = Culture , parks , and recreation = =

Adjacent to the community is the River Oaks Shopping Center , Houston 's first shopping center . Constructed in 1927 and designed by architect Hugh Prather , the center , originally known as River Oaks Community Center , was one of the first automobile @- @ oriented retail centers in the United States . Its design , with arcs of retail space on either side of West Gray Avenue , was considered a model for future development . Portions of the historic shopping center were demolished in September 2007 to redevelop the site for a bookstore and parking garage . As of 2008 , Landmark Theatres operates the River Oaks Theatre , an " arthouse " theater , located in the center . The theater is the last historic movie theater in Houston that is still being used as it was originally designed .

River Oaks is home to the forty @- @ member River Oaks Chamber Orchestra . The orchestra is composed of musicians from around the United States and guest conductors from around the world . River Oaks Country Club , located within the community on the northern end of River Oaks Boulevard , is a country club that includes a golf facility that was designed by architect Donald Ross . Ross is considered to be one of the most significant golf course designers in the history of golfing . Opening in 1923 , the country club has hosted the River Oaks International Tennis Tournament since 1931 . The Houston Intown Chamber of Commerce assists economic activity in River Oaks . The Houston Ballet headquarters , training facilities and pre @- @ professional school , the Ben Stevenson Academy , were located on West Gray near the River Oaks Shopping Center until 2012 .

= = = Parks = = =

Several municipal parks serve River Oaks . River Oaks Park and the River Oaks Community Center

, operated by the City of Houston , is one block west of Lamar High School . River Oaks Park includes a .25 @-@ mile (0 @.@ 40 km) off @-@ road trail located within the park 's boundaries , tennis courts , a playground , and a lighted sports ground . River Oaks Park includes the Pumpkin Carriage , intended to evoke Cinderella 's carriage . Around 2003 Friends of River Oaks Parks had restored the carriage . The Houston Business Journal said " Pumpkin Park provides outstanding resources for neighborhood children ? a wonderful playground , community center and the Summer Enrichment Program offering youngsters sports activities and crafts classes . "

On June 24 , 1999 , the River Oaks Property Owners , Inc. entered an agreement with the City of Houston ; ROPO agreed to maintain and upgrade parks and esplanades in River Oaks . ROPO also has the right to spend its own funds to improve them . Municipal parks assisted by ROPO include Del Monte Park , Mary Elliot Park , Ella Lee Park , Homewood Park , Kirby Park , Rebecca Meyer Park , Olympia Park , Pine Valley Park , and Sleepy Hollow Park .

= = Education = =

= = = Primary and secondary schools = = =

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) operates the public schools serving River Oaks . The community is within Trustee District VII , represented by Harvin C. Moore as of 2009 . As of 2000 , almost 9 % of HISD property taxes originated from River Oaks residents .

The attendance boundaries of River Oaks Elementary School , Lanier Middle School , and Lamar High School include River Oaks . Lanier opened in 1926 , River Oaks Elementary opened in 1929 , and Lamar opened in 1937 . Laura Nathan @-@ Garner , author of the second edition of the *Insiders ' Guide to Houston* (2012) , wrote that " Many children in [River Oaks] attend [Lamar] " .

Prior to desegregation , River Oaks Elementary had around 800 children . After desegregation , many parents removed their children from River Oaks Elementary , and the school was far below capacity . In 1986 the neighborhood component of the school closed . At the time River Oaks had mainly older families . At the time the remaining families who did have children had the money to send their children to private school and preferred to do so .

Between 1986 and 1996 , River Oaks Elementary School only admitted magnet school students from other areas of the city . The community was divided between the attendance zones of Wilson Elementary School (opened in 1925) , the now closed Will Rogers Elementary School (opened in 1950 , closed in summer 2006) , and Poe Elementary School . By 1995 River Oaks Elementary became one of the most prestigious elementary schools in Houston and had a waiting list . By that year several new families had established themselves in River Oaks and many of them were interested in sending their children to public school . In 1995 , several River Oaks parents petitioned HISD to re @-@ establish the neighborhood program at River Oaks Elementary School which allows non @-@ magnet students residing in the school 's boundaries to attend . Some magnet parents opposed , believing that the River Oaks program would reduce racial diversity at the school . In 1996 , HISD added a neighborhood program to the school for grades Kindergarten through 2nd , with grades 3 through 5 phased in over a subsequent three @-@ year period .

Crockett Early Childhood Center is the closest public early childhood center to River Oaks , while Wilson Elementary School 's preschool program is the closest tuition @-@ based program . Only economically disadvantaged students , homeless students , students who are not proficient in English , or children of active @-@ duty members of the U.S. military or whose parent has been killed , injured , or missing in action while on active duty may be enrolled in tuition @-@ free HISD preschools . Students who are eligible for HISD 's preschools may attend any Early Childhood Center in Houston ISD for free . Students not eligible may enroll in tuition @-@ based HISD preschool programs .

Several independent (private) schools serve the community . Since the 1970s and by 1995 , most of the children in River Oaks were sent to private schools . Catholic schools , operated by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Galveston @-@ Houston , include St. Thomas High School (9 ? 12

, males only , north of River Oaks along the north edge of the Buffalo Bayou) and St. Anne Catholic School (K @-@ 8 , south of River Oaks at Shepherd and Westheimer) . Other private schools in the area and private schools marketed to River Oaks families include St. John 's School (K ? 12 , in Upper Kirby) , Annunciation Orthodox School (K @-@ 8 , in the Neartown area) , River Oaks Baptist School (K @-@ 8 , in River Oaks) , Episcopal High School (9 ? 12 , Bellaire) , The Kinkaid School in (Piney Point Village) . In 2006 St. Anne Catholic School received the Blue Ribbon Award .

= = = Colleges and universities = = =

River Oaks is within the Houston Community College System boundaries . The closest campuses are the Central Campus in Midtown and the West Loop Center . Four @-@ year universities and colleges in close proximity to River Oaks include University of St. Thomas in Montrose and Rice University in the Houston Museum District .

= = = Libraries = = =

The community is served by the Adele B. Looscan Branch of Houston Public Library . It opened in September 2007 . The former library , established in 1956 , closed on August 27 , 2005 and was demolished in February 2006 .

The previous Looscan branch had around 61 @,@ 000 visitors in the fiscal year 2005 . The original plans for Looscan called for the library to get a \$ 5 @.@ 4 million renovation . An Upper Kirby group proposed a new site near the Upper Kirby YMCA . Around that period the group Friends of Neighborhood Libraries began raising funds . The replacement library , costing \$ 6 @.@ 2 million , has twice the staff and two and one half times the size of the previous facility . Friends of Neighborhood Libraries raised one million dollars in four months , and around \$ 2 @.@ 5 million in total to help fund the new library . The 21 @,@ 000 square feet (2 @,@ 000 m2) library , designed by Jackson & Ryan Architects , houses over 60 @,@ 000 books and is the first city LEED @-@ certified facility . It includes a 120 @-@ seat multipurpose meeting room and a 14 @-@ seat private conference room . The library has several reading areas , including the Marsha Moody Children 's Reading Room , a teenager reading area , and a periodical reading area . The exterior was designed to match visual cues of buildings in the surrounding area , such as the River Oaks Baptist Church and School . The Emily Scott and Joseph Wood Evans Clock Tower , a part of the library 's exterior , includes a garden book archive and works of art .

= = = Gallery of schools = = =

= = Media = =

The Houston Chronicle is the area 's regional newspaper . On Thursdays , residents receive the Bellaire / West U / River Oaks / Meyerland section , which covers events specific to these neighborhoods . The River Oaks Examiner and Village News are local newspapers distributed in the community . The River Oaks Buzz is a monthly magazine mailed free of charge to all residents . The River Oaks Buzz is about people , products and services in the community .

= = Government and infrastructure = =

= = = Local government = = =

Houston Fire Department operates Station 3 at 3735 West Alabama at Cummins , near River Oaks . The fire station is in Fire District 28 . Station 3 moved to its current location in 1958 . The station

underwent a renovation in 2003 and 2004 and re @-@ opened in the northern hemisphere spring of 2004 . The community is within the Houston Police Department 's Central Patrol Division , headquartered at 61 Riesner . River Oaks has one of the lowest crime rates in Houston .

The River Oaks Property Owners , Inc. offices are at 3923 San Felipe Road . The community operates its own private security force , River Oaks Patrol . The Texas Department of Public Safety classifies the force as a guard , alarm , and investigation company . The community is within Super Neighborhood # 23 and its recognized council was established on October 15 , 2001 . Each super neighborhood represents a group of civic clubs , places of worship , businesses , and other institutions and community interests . River Oaks is a part of the Houston City Council District G.

= = = County , state , and federal government = = =

River Oaks is within Harris County Precinct 4 . As of 2011 , R. Jack Cagle is the precinct 's County Commissioner . River Oaks is in Justice of the Peace / Constable Precinct One . As of 2012 Alan Rosen is the constable .

River Oaks is located in District 134 of the Texas House of Representatives and represented by Sarah Davis , a Republican . River Oaks is within District 13 of the Texas Senate and represented by Rodney Ellis , a Democrat .

The community is within Texas 's 7th congressional district . As of 2013 , the representative is John Culberson . The United States Post Office Service (USPS) operates the River Oaks Post Office at 1900 West Gray Street , supporting the zip codes 77027 and 77019 . The post office sits on a 109 @, @ 160 square feet (10 @, @ 141 m2) property with a gross building area of 18 @, @ 100 square feet (1 @, @ 680 m2) . In addition the Julius Melcher Post Office is near River Oaks . In January 2009 the USPS announced that it will put the River Oaks Post Office property up for sale . In October of that year the USPS announced that it , for now , will not sell the River Oaks and Melcher post offices .

Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County , Texas (METRO) operates bus services in River Oaks . Lines serving River Oaks include 3 Langley / West Gray , 18 Kirby Limited , 35 Fairview , 73 Bellfort Crosstown , and 82 Westheimer .

= = = Politics = = =

Politicians and political parties conduct fundraising campaigns in River Oaks because it has " six desired qualities " including " allure , location , preening , location , Secret Service familiarity and location . " In both 2000 and 2004 , River Oaks residents gave \$ 3 @. @ 9 million to political campaigns . In 2008 , they gave \$ 3 @. @ 4 million to political campaigns through the middle of that year . River Oaks has been described as one of Houston 's " richest , most Republican neighborhoods " .

= = = Notable residents = = =

Jim Bath , businessman

John Connally , Governor of Texas

Clyde Drexler , professional basketball player

Dan Duncan , businessman

Carolyn Farb , philanthropist

Andrew Fastow and Lea Fastow , primary figure of the Enron scandal and his wife

Tilman J. Fertitta , businessman and reality TV star

Ima Hogg , philanthropist and art collector

Molly Ivins , journalist , author

Bob Lanier , former Mayor of Houston

Khalid bin Mahfouz , Saudi Arabian oil figure

John W. Mecom , Sr.

Robert Mosbacher , businessman and politician
Joel Osteen , pastor of Lakewood Church
Fayez Sarofim , investor on the Forbes 500
Jeffrey Skilling , primary figure of the Enron scandal
Lynn Wyatt , socialite and philanthropist
Oscar Wyatt , oil baron

= = Gallery = =