A GUIDE TO POWER
HOUSTON NETWORKS

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Who are the groups and agencies who hold power in Houston? Who predicts the future of the city, and who plans the present?

Houston's vast and bewildering array of public and private partnerships can make understanding the city difficult. Here, we attempt to discern the broad outlines of networks of power and influence in Houston. This is by no means a comprehensive map of organizations, only a draft that will hopefully evolve over time.

But what this map makes clear is that many organizations exist toward essentially the same purpose, and that stronger or more numerous connections could be formed. It's worth asking whether a lack of connectivity creates a Balkanized condition of fragmented efforts.

To make matters worse, the City's decades-old official "hands off" policy towards the built environment causes many projects to be built without regard to actual existing conditions—allowing an owner to build whatever they think is the best and highest use of their property. The vacuum created by selective or no planning allows for myriad non-profit and public/private partnerships to resolve planning issues. In theory, this sounds like freedom, but is it?

A disclaimer: this graphic is based only on publicly available information and may not reflect very real, but perhaps hidden, connections between organizations. All the information gathered here is readily available in the public record: partnerships and collaborations listed on websites and promotional materials. Many other channels of power exist—both direct and indirect, public and hidden. Groups like Houston Parks Board could be shown in multiple clusters.

In addition, this guide does not attempt to list every public, private, and non-profit organization operating in Houston. For instance, we did not map foundations, simply because they are too numerous and diverse in their missions. Likewise, we didn't examine health care, social services, or private/for-profit companies. Many housing and urban development and arts organizations were left off. And we may have inadvertently left off key organizations that should be represented. For that, we apologize in advance. Future iterations and future guides will hopefully contain a more complete map of these organizations.

LEGEND

- ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE ORGANIZATIONS
- PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS
- ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
- QUALITY OF LIFE ORGANIZATIONS
- ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS

Primary Function
Secondary Functions

Direct Connection Between Organizations

Indirect or Informal Connection Between Organizations

Organizational Description

Organizations with Similar Aims

Organizational Description: Explaining what various groups do.

Design Advocacy: Organizations, alliances, and schools dedicated specifically to architecture and design.

Community Development: Groups developing or transforming under-served communities.

Research Groups: Centers and think tanks dedicated to addressing Houston's urban issues.

Preservation: Houston has a number of groups dedicated to preservation of both historic buildings and districts.

Landscape & Beautification: Groups dedicated to preserving streetscapes and landscape in the city.

Environmental Advocacy: Groups working toward a more sustainable Houston.

Transportation: Organizations devoted to addressing multimodal transport in Houston.

Economic Partnership: Organizations of businesses set up to assist with planning and economic development.

Foundations: Foundations in Houston are diverse and dedicated to a variety of issues—and were not included here.

Bayous: Numerous groups have a mission of either restoring or protecting the bayous, as well as using the bayous for flood control.

Nature Conservancies: Community groups dedicated to preserving natural lands in Houston.

Super Neighborhoods: Houston is divided into 88 Super Neighborhoods, encouraged to work together for common goals.

TIRZs: A Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone used to improve an otherwise underdeveloped section of a community.

Management District: A Board set up to manage planning and economic development for urban districts.

Public Improvement District (PID): A district designed to improve economic development for urban districts.

Nodes

Rice Design Alliance
CITE
Rice School of Architecture
CDCs
Rebuilding Together Houston
Houston Bikeway Program
Houston Airport System
Texas Department of Transportation
Houstonians for Responsible Growth
OKRA
Washington Avenue Developers Association
Super Neighborhoods
Greenspoint
Gulfgate
Hardy/Near Northside
Fourth Ward
Lake Houston
The Progressive Forum
Houston Habitat for Humanity
Bike Houston
Architecture and Design Advocacy
UH Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture
Local Area Development Corp. (LISC)
Urban Land Institute
Better Houston
METRO Houston
Port of Houston Authority
Museum District Business Alliance
Greater Houston Partnership
Central Houston Inc.
Market Square
City Park
Old Sixth Ward
Memorial City
Fifth Ward
Eastside
Midtown
Harrisburg
TIRZs
OST/Almeda
East Downtown
Community Design Resource Center
Houston Tomorrow
Citizens' Transportation Coalition
Public Works
Southwest Houston
Houston Arts Alliance
Art League Houston
Greater Houston Builders Association
Houston First
South Post Oak
St. George
Upper Kirby
Uptown
Memorial Heights
AIA
Gulf Coast Green Build
Planning
Economic Partnership
Village Enclaves
Leland Woods
American Planning Association
Center for Houston's Future
Community Development
City of Houston
Houston-Galveston Area Council
Foundations
Congress for the New Urbanism
Historic Houston
Houston Museum District Association
Blueprint Houston
Municipal Utilities
Near Northwest
Greater Northside
Greater Greenspoint
Baybrook
Houston Mod
Preservation Houston
Houston Preservation (HAHC)
Houston Council of Engineering Companies
Houston Parks & Recreation
Houston Parks Board
Harris County Storm Water Quality
Spring Branch
Greater East End
East Downtown
Complete Streets
Harris County
Harris County Watershed Protection
Memorial City
Greater Southeast
Westchase
Scenic Houston
Air Alliance Houston
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Buffalo Bayou Partnership
Brays Bayou Association
National Flood Insurance Program
Harris County Flood Control District
Harris County Public Infrastructure
Brays Oaks
Energy Corridor
Sharpstown
Midtown
Uptown
Keep Houston Beautiful
Transition Houston
Bayou Preservation Association
Management Districts
Houston Downtown
Trees for Houston
WOW Roundabout Initiative
Houston Climate Protection Alliance
Environmental Advocacy
Sierra Club Houston
Greens Bayou Corridor Coalition
Bayou Land Conservancy
Japhet Creek Conservancy
Memorial Park Conservancy
Katy Prairie Conservancy
American Society of Landscape Architects
Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens
Jesse Jones Park & Nature Center
Houston Arboretum & Nature Center
Houston Audubon
Texas Campaign for the Environment
The Nature Conservancy
Nature Conservancies
Hermann Park Conservancy
Federal Government
Public Improvement Districts
Aldine
Houston Downtown
Nature Discovery Center
Nature Centers
Airline
Harris County #2
Lamar Terrace
Sharpstown
Upper Kirby