

## Houston's Ward System

### History

- Houston was incorporated in 1837. Its charter called for a mayor and eight aldermen, although it took a subsequent charter in 1839 and a supplement in 1840 to divide the town into four wards from which those aldermen would be elected. A nine-square mile area centered on the county courthouse delineated the city limits. The intersection of Main Street and Congress Avenue formed the wards' innermost boundaries that extended out to the city limits.
- In 1866 the Fifth Ward was added. A final ward, the Sixth, was carved out of the Fourth Ward in 1877.
- In 1905, following the example of Galveston, Houston residents voted 1262 to 815 to dissolve its ward-based government in favor of a commission form of government.

"When There Were Wards: A Series", *Houston History*, v.8, no.1

### Map (wards outlined on a 1920 map of Houston)



## Ward Boundaries

Source: Handbook of Texas Online

### 1<sup>st</sup> Ward

- One of the original four wards in Houston, when it was created in 1840
- Strategically located at the intersection of Buffalo Bayou and White Oak Bayou, near an area known as [Allen's Landing](#)
- Was defined as all areas within the city limits of Houston
- North of Congress Street and west of Main Street

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward

- One of the original four wards in Houston, when it was created in 1840
- Community known as the Second Ward today is roughly bounded by [Buffalo Bayou](#) to the north, Lockwood Avenue to the east, and railroad tracks to the south and west
- Known as Segundo Barrio, Spanish for "second neighborhood"

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward

- Immediately southeast of [Downtown Houston](#) and to the east of the [Texas Medical Center](#)
- Became the center of Houston's [African American](#) community
- Original district extended south of Congress Street and east of Main Street and ended at the north shore of the Brays Bayou

### 4<sup>th</sup> Ward

- Located inside the [610 Loop](#) directly west of and adjacent to [Downtown Houston](#)
- The site of Freedmen's Town, a post-[U.S. Civil War](#) community of [African-Americans](#)
- The first freed slaves departed the Brazos River cotton plantations in 1866 and entered Houston via San Felipe Road (now West Dallas)

### 5<sup>th</sup> Ward

- About 2 miles northeast of [Downtown](#); it is bounded by the [Buffalo Bayou](#), Jensen Drive, Liberty Road, and Lockwood Drive
- Was created partly from two other wards, the First Ward, which ceded the area to the north and east of [White Oak Bayou](#) and Little White Oak Bayou, and the Second Ward, which ceded all land within the Houston city limits to the north of [Buffalo Bayou](#)
- By the mid-1880s, it was virtually all black, home to working-class people who made their livings in Houston's eastside ship channel and industrial areas or as domestics for wealthy Houstonians.

### 6<sup>th</sup> Ward

- The Sixth Ward was created out of the northern part of the [Fourth Ward](#) in 1876, and is the only ward that does not extend into [downtown Houston](#)'s historical center, although a fraction of what used to be the ward is considered to be within the boundaries of downtown
- Old Sixth Ward lies on the western edge of [downtown Houston](#), bounded by Memorial Drive to the south, [Glenwood Cemetery](#) to the west, [Washington Avenue](#) to the north, and Houston Avenue to the east