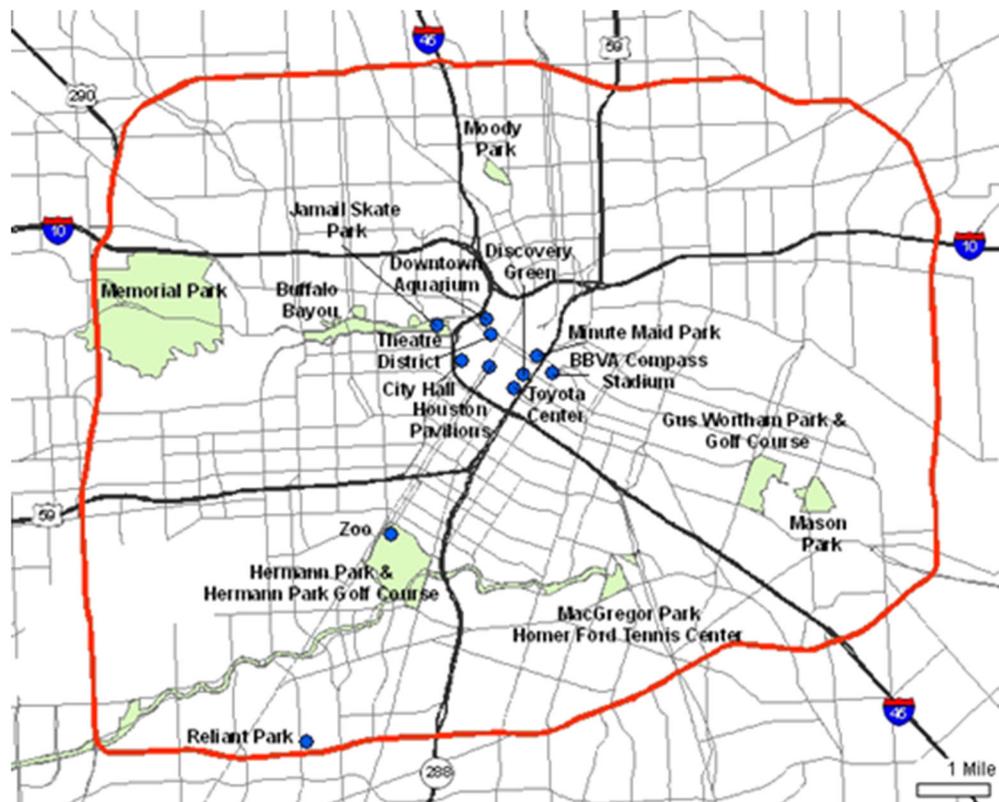


Welcome to Houston Y'all!

HOUSING:

Rentals

If you want to know where the current students live, check out the results of the housing survey [here](#). Some general tips include checking the floodplain maps (<https://www.harriscountyfemt.org/>) or the FEMA flood map service (<https://msc.fema.gov/portal/search#searchresultsanchor>) to determine the flood risk, as well as trying to secure an apartment that is on the second floor or above. While we hope that flooding is something that you will not have to worry about, it never hurts to be prepared. See **EMERGENCY PREPARATION** section below for more information. As a general rule of thumb, many students prefer to live “inside the loop” or within the boundaries of I-610.



Many apartment complexes require you to purchase renters insurance, and it is a good idea to have even if it is not required. This insurance will cover everything inside your rental that may not be covered otherwise. Many insurance companies offer like State Farm and Allstate offer renter's insurance if you are an existing customer, but it can also be purchased from online resources like Lemonade (<https://www.lemonade.com/>). Please note that renter's insurance generally doesn't cover flooding, so it may be necessary to seek this out as well.

Finding a roommate

By now, you should have received an email inviting you to join a Slack Channel with other incoming students. If you have not, reach out to Karen Weinberg (Karen.Weinberg@uth.tmc.edu) to get this sorted. Additionally, roommates can be found on Craigslist, or Apartments.com (Safety note: Do NOT give out sensitive information like passport numbers, social security numbers or ID unless the application requires it). This provides a convenient way to find short-term housing if needed.

UT Housing

UT Housing also provides apartments that many student find convenient, information can be found at <https://www.uth.edu/housing/future-residents/index.htm>. Please be advised that the application cycle for these apartments open in January, and spots fill up almost immediately (especially for phase 2 and 3 housing). For this reason, some students opt to find temporary housing while they join the waitlist. UT housing offers many amenities, such as on-site laundry, recreation centers and 24/7 security, but pets are not permitted.

Home Ownership

Although many students prefer to live as close to the medical center as possible, the Houston area has many suburbs that are within commuting distance to the Texas Medical Center (TMC) while also being family-friendly such as Katy, Sugar Land Pearland, Manvel, Alvin etc. If you are interested in these cities, you can check out websites like AreaVibes (<https://www.areavibes.com/>) to get a better idea of crime rates, cost of living, and school district ratings.

TRANSPORTATION:

Bikes/Scooters

If you wish to ride your bike/scooter to campus, the TMC has many bike racks that are available for use. While registering your bike with the TMC police department is not required, it is highly encouraged as it will help the police department return the bike to you in the event that it is stolen. More information on the location of bike racks and the registration process can be found here: <https://www.tmc.edu/parking/bike-information/>. Additionally, as each state has different requirements for cyclists, it is recommended that you check out the Texas bicycle laws. Texas A&M has a convenient website here: <https://transport.tamu.edu/Alternative/bicycles/statelaw.aspx> with more information. Houston BCycle also offers discounted rates for TMC students and staff to use the bike share program. BCycle station maps can be found here: <https://houston.bicycle.com/station-map>, with information regarding student pricing and promo codes here: <https://www.houstonbicycle.com/student-memberships>

Public Transportation

There are many different options for public transportation within the TMC and surrounding area including buses and the METRORail. More information on stops and

schedules can be found at <https://www.ridemetro.org/Pages/Bus.aspx> and <https://www.ridemetro.org/Pages/Rail.aspx>. While passes can be purchased with cash, Metro also offers reloadable student cards that offer a discounted student fare when used (<https://www.ridemetro.org/pages/faresstudent.aspx>). In order to apply for a student card, you will need to show approved documents that confirm your student status.

Shuttles

While both UTHealth and MD Anderson typically offer shuttle services between the buildings on campus, restrictions put in place due to COVID-19 have limited services. As of June 7th, 2021 the MD Anderson shuttle service has instituted temporary routes available to students for select buildings on campus (<https://gsbs.uth.edu/academics/policies/alerts/parking-transit>). Information on the UTHealth shuttle service like stops, hours of operations and schedules can be found here: <https://www.uth.edu/shuttle/>. The UTHealth shuttles can also be tracked in real time by using the DoubleMap app or website (<https://tmc.doublemap.com/map/>).

Parking

If you choose to drive your car, and wish to park on campus there are many different options. While many of the garages closest to campus offer daily rates, you can also sign up for monthly contracts that are more cost efficient, and convenient. You can learn more about the TMC contract parking options/prices online (<https://gsbs.uth.edu/orientation/helpful-links.htm>). Note: you can always use shuttles/public transportation to help you get to and from your parking lot if you want to choose one that is farther away!

Personal Vehicles

If you have a personal vehicle that you plan to bring with you, you will need to register it before you can get your driver's license. In order to do that, you first need to have your vehicle inspected -- this can be done at most mechanic shops or oil change locations. You can also use the Texas DPS Inspection Station Locator (<https://www.dps.texas.gov/RSD/VI/VIactiveStationLocator/default.aspx>). In addition, you will need to make sure that you have auto insurance to cover your vehicle. The state of Texas requires a minimum coverage of \$30,000 per injured person up to \$60,000 for everyone injured in an accident as well as a minimum of \$25,000 coverage for property damage. If you have any questions, you can ask your insurance company for additional information. You may also want to inquire about flood insurance on your car.

After your vehicle is covered by insurance and passes inspection, you will need to visit the county tax-assessor to register your car. Appointments to do so can be made online (<https://www.hctax.net/Auto/Appointments/Appointment>). Once you have successfully registered your car, you may proceed to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to apply for your driver's license. Note: you MUST bring your tax office receipt and proof of liability insurance with you to obtain your license. Additionally requirements may apply if you are bringing a car from another county (call 713-274-8000 for further information). The requirements for applying for a

Texas driver's license can be found at: <https://www.dps.texas.gov/section/driver-license/how-apply-texas-driver-license>. Please be aware that written or driving skills exams will be required of any applicant with a driver's license issued from any country other than: the U.S., Canada, France, South Korea, Germany, or Taiwan.

WHAT TO DO:

Local Events:

Livestock Show and Rodeo

One of the biggest annual events in the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo (<https://www.rodeohouston.com/>) to be held at NRG Park February 28th - March 20th, 2022. In addition to the more conventional aspects of a rodeo (Western wear, bull riding etc.) the Houston Rodeo boasts a full carnival, food booths hosted by over 100 local restaurants, a Bar-B-Que contest and even concerts!

Sporting Events

The Houston area is incredibly proud of all of our sports teams, in fact we have SIX major league teams: The Astros (Baseball), Texas (American Football), Dynamo and Dash (Soccer), Rockets (Basketball) and the SaberCats (Rugby), so there is plenty to cheer for! If you're a sports fan, or simply looking for a team to root for, Houston has you covered. Many teams, like the Astros, offer discount nights for students (<https://www.mlb.com/astros/tickets/specials/college-students>) if you sign up using your UTHealth email address.

Recreation

For those students who would rather participate in sports than watch them, the TMC has plenty of options! A wide variety of workouts are available for whatever your fitness goals are, whether it be crossfit (<https://www.crossfittmc.com/>), yoga (<https://blackswanyoga.com/houston/>), High-Intensity Interval Training (<https://www.orangetheory.com/en-us/>) or rock-climbing (<https://www.texasrockgym.com/>). Chances are, there is another student in your cohort that would love to be your workout buddy! Additionally, UTHealth has a student recreation center available to all students (<https://www.uth.edu/recreation-center/membership>). As a bonus, Student-Service fees cover the cost of membership!

Parks and Trails

If parks and trails are more your speed, the Houston area has you covered as well! The Houston Parks and Recreation Department has a list of walking, running and biking trails to check out (<https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/trails.html>), in addition to dog parks and various attractions like gardens, pools, tennis courts, and skateparks (<https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/facilities.html>).

WHERE TO EAT:

While the Houston area has a lot to be proud of, perhaps the thing it does best is the food. Being the fourth biggest city in the nation means that there are myriad options for basically every palate. You can find multiple lists online that claim to rank the best restaurants in the area, you have to check them out for yourselves. When in doubt, ask the other students for some recommendations, and get a group together!

EMERGENCY PREPARATION:

There are so many great things about living in the Houston-area. Unfortunately, the weather and potential for natural disasters is not one of them. When it comes to floods/flash floods or hurricanes, it is always better to be safe than sorry (note: while any of these events may happen during your residence in Houston, the most likely event is a flash flood, and remember: when in doubt, TURN AROUND, DON'T DROWN). In addition to checking flood maps online prior to choosing an apartment/house, we recommend that you make a plan now for what to do in the event of a disaster. These plans should include:

- Where to park your car: To prevent any potential damage to your vehicle, you should scope out a safe parking spot (if possible) that is elevated (not underground/street level). In addition, you should make sure that your car is covered under flood insurance whether or not you are able to locate such parking.
- Where to go if your home is affected by flooding: While hopefully you may never need to evacuate, it would be ideal to identify an emergency option for housing. Whether this is a friend with an apartment on a higher floor, or a family member that lives close by, you should have a plan in place should you need to vacate your house.
- Back-up power and food options: Even if your residence is not subjected to flooding, there is the chance that you will lose power in the event of a major storm. Because of this, you should stock up on non-perishables (canned foods, rice, water bottles etc.) and batteries now. Generators are also a good idea if you live in a larger residence (like a townhouse or home) and they can power your fridge and other essential appliances in the event of power loss.
- Bug-Out Bag: In the event of evacuation, or shelter in place event, all students should be equipped with a bug-out bag (or ideally two: One for your home, and one in an additional accessible location like the trunk of your car if applicable). These should contain: copies of any relevant prescriptions, additional medication, a first-aid kit, lighters/matches, eating utensils, non-perishable food items, water bottles, protein bars, and miscellaneous items to keep you from losing your mind (deck of cards, books, comics, etc.). A basic rule of thumb would be to try and think of anything you might need while you're camping. All emergency kits should also contain a battery/solar/hand-powered radio to keep up with any emergency notifications.

- Preparedness materials: For further information on how to prepare for a disaster, the Houston Office of Emergency Management has an easy to navigate website: <https://www.houstonoem.org/request-preparedness-materials/>

SHOPPING:

In addition to excellent food and entertainment options available to Houston residents, there are also multiple shopping centers in our area. The Galleria, for example, is the largest shopping center in Texas, and offers more than 400 stores and restaurants. Be forewarned, however, that parking at the Galleria is limited and confusing, so if you're in a hurry you may want to take public transit (Metro bus lines 20, 82, and 433 all stop at the Galleria) or take extra time to navigate parking. If you're looking for shopping a little closer to home, Rice Village is within walking distance from campus (roughly a mile walk) although you can get there by public transport as well (like bus routes 41, 27, and 84). Additionally, there are various parking structures that are free for the first two hours (<https://rice-village.com/directions/>). Rice Village houses multiple boutique and brand name stores as well as various popular dining options.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

No matter what you need, the GSBS will be here to help you. You can contact Karen, (Karen.Weinberg@uth.tmc.edu) or any of your student leadership groups like GSA (gsbs_gsa@uth.tmc.edu) or ISA (gsbs.isa@uth.tmc.edu) if you have any questions or need any assistance. Please note that the GSBS also has an alerts page that you can routinely check for regular updates (<https://gsbs.uth.edu/academics/policies/alerts/index.htm>)

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