

2025 ParkScore Index®

Houston, TX

66

47.7

The ParkScore index is a national comparison of park systems across the 100 most populated cities in the United States. Published annually, the index measures park systems according to five categories reflective of an excellent city park system: access, investment, amenities, acreage, and equity. While the rankings provide fodder for friendly competition, the goal each year of publishing the index is to help leaders advocate for needed park resources and provide relevant data to inform local park improvement efforts. To facilitate a fair comparison across cities, the index aggregates across all public and private organizations supporting parks in each city.

This year, Houston received a score of 47.7 points out of 100 based on an average of the five categories. There are 15 measures across these categories, with points awarded based on how Houston compares to the other 99 cities for that particular measure.

51

out of 100
points

Acreage

The acreage score indicates the relative abundance of large 'destination' parks, which include large natural areas that provide critical mental health as well as climate and conservation benefits. There are two components to the acreage score. Of these, Houston scores about average on the percentage of the city's overall area that is dedicated to parkland (60 out of 100 points), and about average on median park size (42 out of 100 points).

49

out of 100
points

Access

The access score indicates the percentage of a city's residents that live within a walkable half-mile of a park - the average distance that most people are willing to walk to reach a destination. With 63% of its population living this close to a park, Houston scores about average in this category.

38

out of
100 points

Investment

The investment score indicates the relative financial health of a city's park system, which is essential to ensuring the park system is maintained at a high level. This value aggregates park and recreation spending across all agencies and organizations within the city, including monetized volunteer hours. In Houston, a total of \$127 per capita is spent each year on publicly accessible parks and recreation, below average for this category.

50

out of
100 points

Amenities

The amenities score indicates the relative abundance of park activities popular among a diverse selection of user groups (kids, teenagers, adults, seniors). Overall for this category, Houston scores about average, though it varies by amenity: basketball hoops (45 points out of 100), sport fields and diamonds (51 points), dog parks (38 points), playgrounds (30 points), senior and rec centers (40 points), permanent restrooms (56 points), and splashpads (72 points).

50

out of
100 points

Equity

The equity score indicates the fairness in the distribution of parks and park space between neighborhoods by race and income. This category is an average of two types of metrics. On the first set of measures, Houston scores about average: 46 out of 100 points for people of color living within a 10-minute walk of a park and 43 points for low-income households. The second set of measures compare the distribution of park space. In Houston, residents living in neighborhoods of color have access to 7% less nearby park space than those living in white neighborhoods (72 points out of 100). Residents living in lower-income neighborhoods have access to 41% less nearby park space than those in higher-income neighborhoods (40 points out of 100).

For additional information on the scoring methodology, please visit www.tpl.org/parkscore/about

2025 ParkScore Index®

Houston, TX

2025 Rank

66

Points

47.7



Values for Houston, TX:

City-wide total City-wide 'per capita' City-wide score*

Value needed for:

1 pt 100 pts

Acreage (51 Points)

Parkland as a percentage of city area	43,139 acres	12.2% of city area	60 points	2.5%	18.6%
Median Park Size	4.9 acres	4.9 acres	42 points	.58	11

Access (49 Points)

Percent of population within a 10-minute walk of a park with public access	63%	49 points	28%	100%
--	-----	-----------	-----	------

Equity (50 Points)

Percent of people of color within a 10-minute walk of a park	61%	46 points	28%	100%
Percent of low-income households within a 10-minute walk of a park	61%	43 points	32%	100%
Residents in neighborhoods of color have _____ park space as those in white neighborhoods	7% less	72 points	89% less	25% more
Low-income neighborhoods have _____ park space as those in high-income neighborhoods	41% less	40 points	85% less	25% more

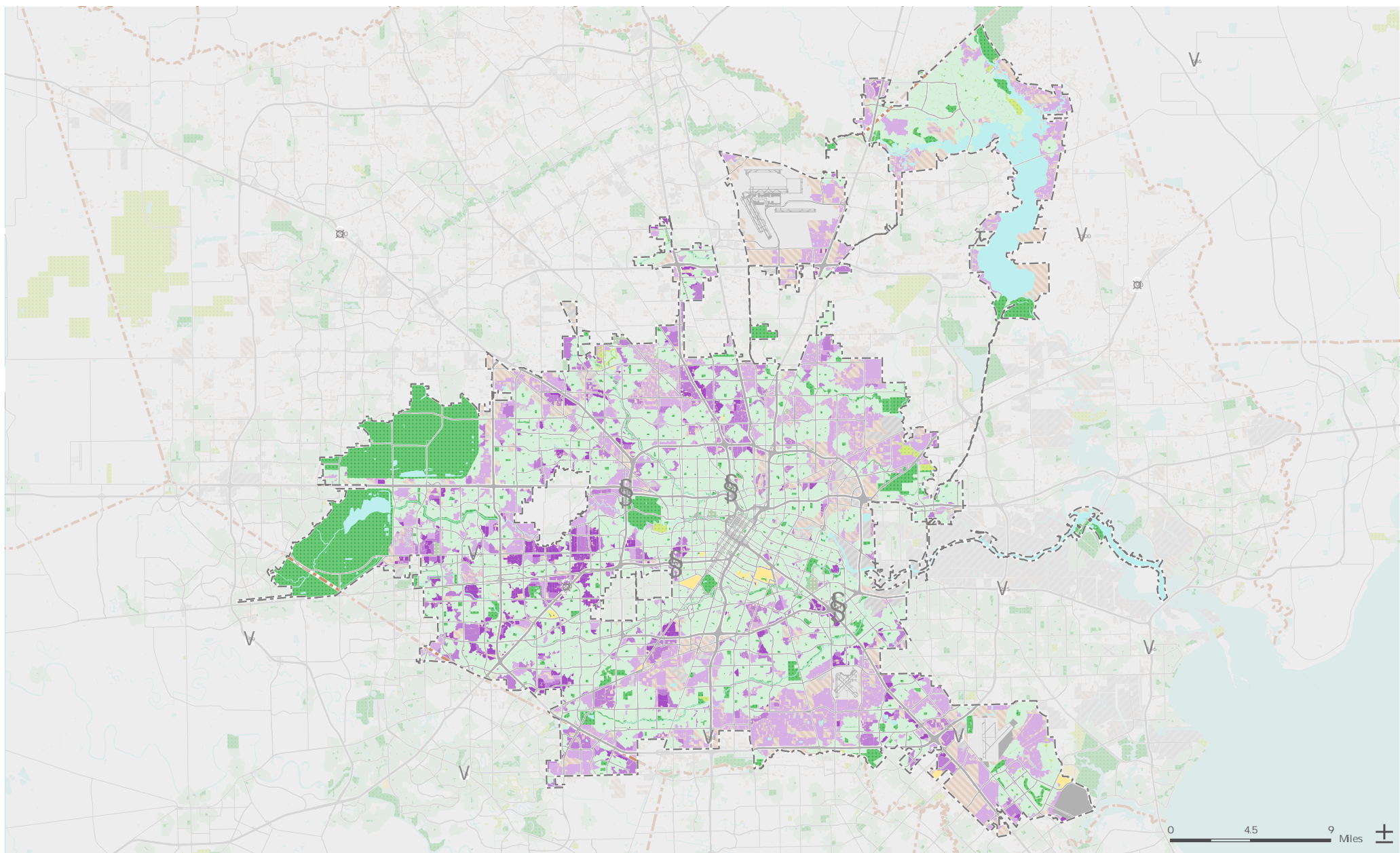
Investment (38 Points)

Annual park investment (three-year average)	\$292,507,541	\$ 127 per resident	38 points	\$44	\$266
---	---------------	---------------------	-----------	------	-------

Amenities (50 Points)

Basketball hoops	832 hoops	3.64 per 10,000 residents	45 points	.63	7.29
Sport fields	735 fields/diamonds	3.22 per 10,000 residents	51 points	.96	5.39
Dog parks	27 dog parks	1.18 per 100,000 residents	38 points	.32	2.62
Playgrounds	502 playgrounds	8.78 per 10,000 children	30 points	2.78	23.16
Senior/Rec centers	81 centers	0.71 per 20,000 residents	40 points	.17	1.52
Restrooms	437 restrooms	1.91 per 10,000 residents	56 points	.30	3.18
Splashpads	52 splashpads	9.10 per 100,000 children	72 points	.35	12.43

*For each of the 15 measures, cities are scored on a 1-100 scale (100 is the highest) relative to the other 99 cities. To adjust for outliers, 100 points is awarded for any city that has more than double the national median for that measure. The amenity average excludes the lowest scoring amenity.



2025 ParkScore® index: Access

HOUSTON, TEXAS

The Access category of the ParkScore® index awards points based on the percentage of the population within a 10-minute walk of a public park. This analysis is provided via the ParkServe® mapping application, which identifies the population living within a 10-minute walk of a park by creating dynamic 1/2-mile service areas (10-minute walking distance) for all public parks. In this analysis, service areas use the street network to determine walkable distance (streets such as highways, freeways, and interstates are considered barriers).

In Houston, 63% of the population lives within a 10-minute walk of a park. Among the remaining 841,087 people without access to a nearby park, Trust for Public Land suggests **where to prioritize the development of new parks** to reduce this gap. This prioritization is based on a comprehensive index of six equally-weighted demographic and environmental metrics.

The six metrics on which the prioritization is based:

- Population density*
- Density of low income households (households with income less than 75% of the urban area median income; less than \$57,000 in Houston)*
- Density of people of color*
- Community health (a combined index based on the rate of poor mental health and low physical activity from the 2024 CDC PLACES census tract dataset)
- Urban heat islands (surface temperature at least 1.25 degrees greater than city mean surface temperature from Trust for Public Land, based on Landsat 8 satellite imagery)
- Pollution burden (air toxics respiratory hazard index from 2024 EPA EJScreen)

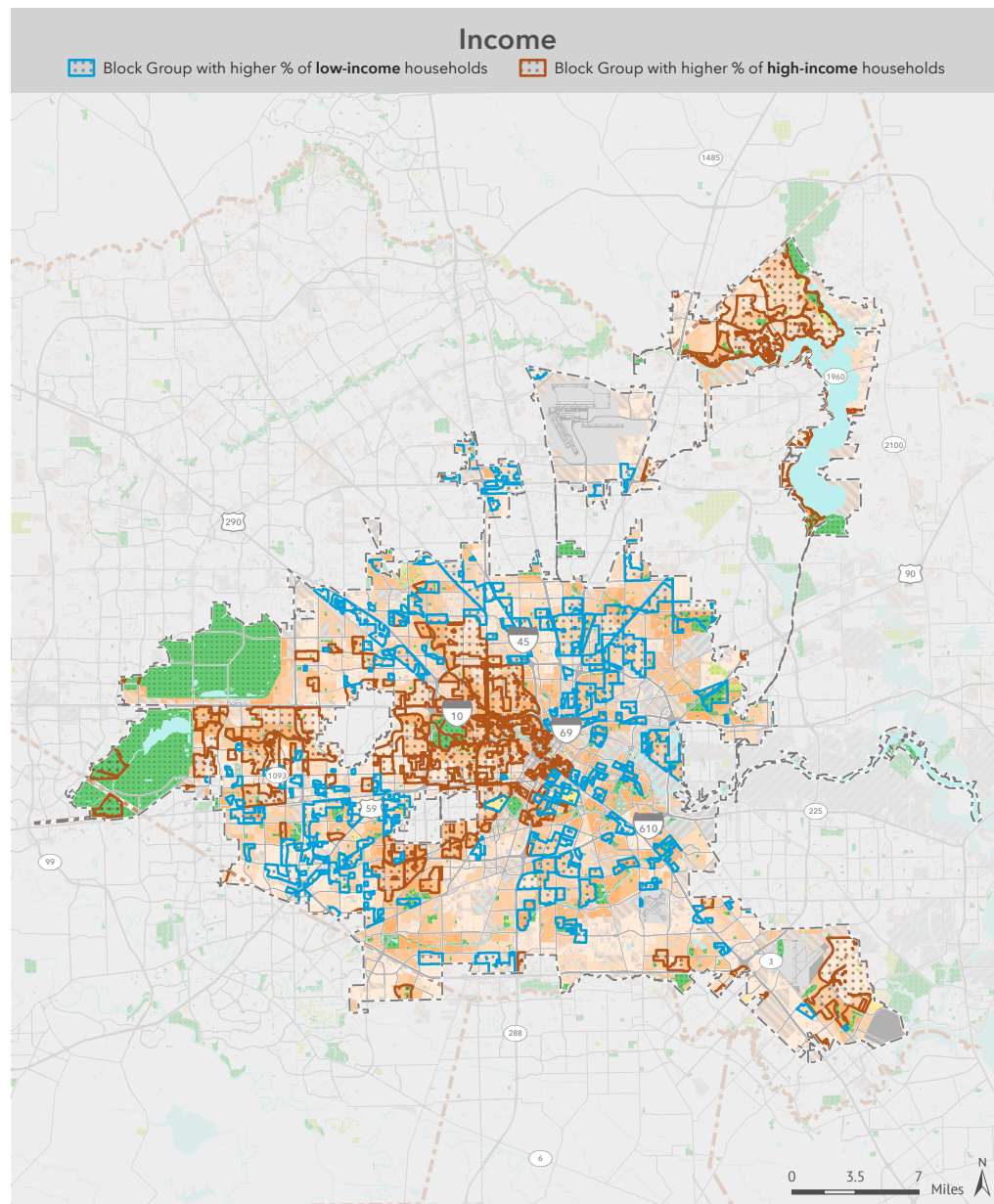
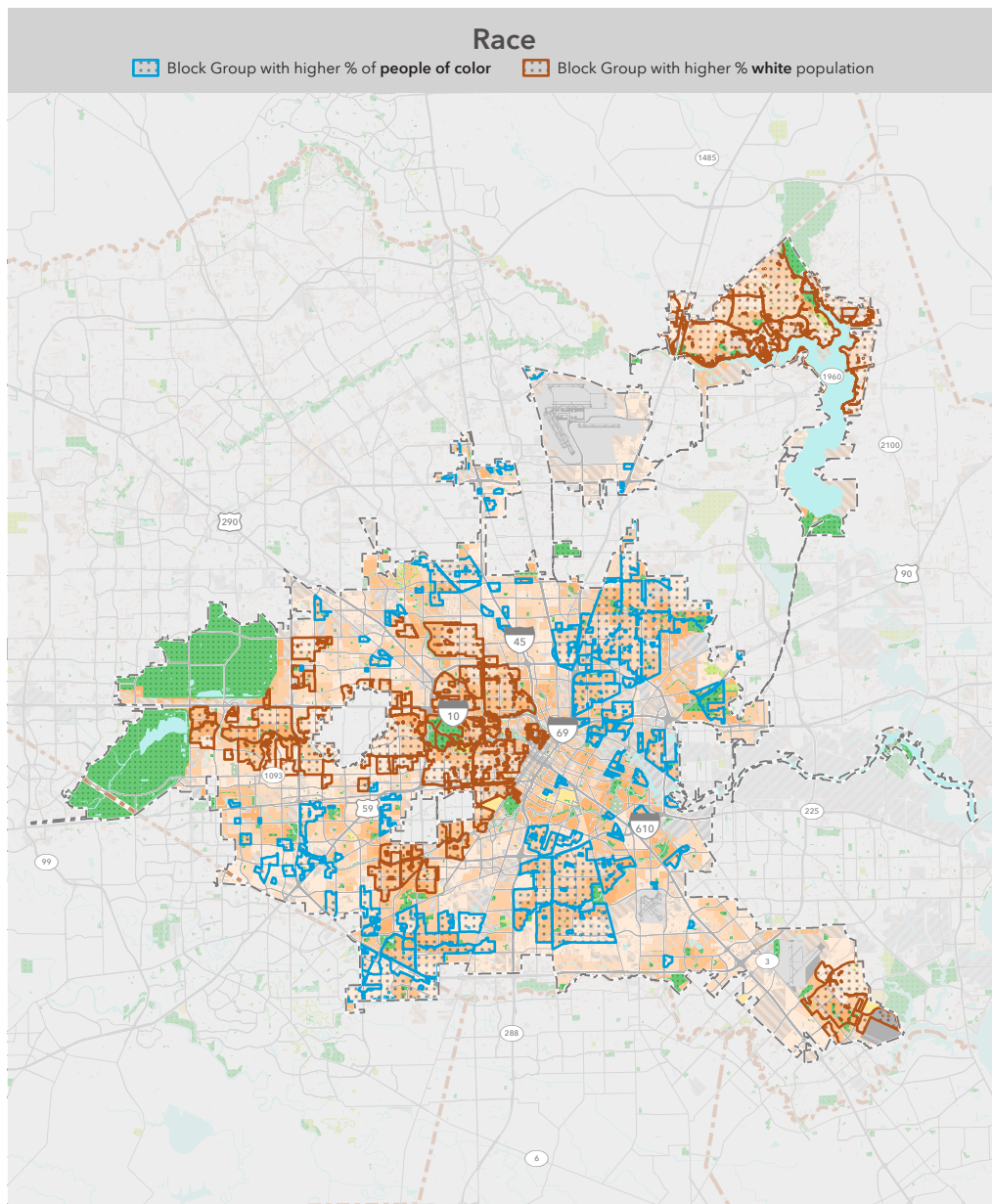
*Derived from 2024 forecast census block points produced by Esri.

- Priority areas for new parks**
(outside of 10-minute walk service areas of parks with public access)
- Very high priority
 - High priority
 - Moderate priority
 - Park with public access
 - Other park or open space
 - 10-minute walk (half-mile) service area of park with public access

- Cemetery
- University
- Military
- Industrial
- Vacant zero population area
- City boundary
- County boundary

Special thanks to the following data providers: Houston, Esri, OSM, CDC, EPA. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. Map created by Trust for Public Land on April 18, 2025. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Copyright © 2025 Trust for Public Land. www.tpl.org





2025 ParkScore® index: **Equity**

HOUSTON, TEXAS

The Equity category of the ParkScore® index awards points in part based on the difference in nearby park space between neighborhoods in a city:

- On a per person basis, ratio of nearby public park space between communities of color and white communities
- On a per person basis, ratio of nearby public park space between low-income communities and high-income communities

Nearby park space per person effectively measures the available park space within a 10-minute walk of a micro-neighborhood, identified by the set of block groups containing the 20% of the city population with the highest concentrations of people of color or white population and high-income or low-income households. Households with income less than 75% of city median income (less than

\$57,000 in Houston) are considered low-income; households with income greater than 125% of city median income (greater than \$96,000 in Houston) are high-income.

In Houston, neighborhoods of color have 7% less park space than white neighborhoods, and low-income neighborhoods have 41% less than high-income neighborhoods.

The metrics for people of color reflect each of the Census-designated race/ethnicity groups: Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous and Native American, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, multiple races, and other communities of color.

Demographic profiles are derived from 2024 forecast census block points provided by Esri.

- Park with public access
- Other park or open space
- Cemetery
- University
- Military
- Industrial
- Vacant zero population area
- City boundary
- County boundary
- Park acres per person**
 - Very high
 - High
 - Moderate
 - Low
 - Very low

Special thanks to the following data providers: Houston, Esri, OSM, CDC, EPA. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. Map created by Trust for Public Land on April 16, 2025. Trust for Public Land and Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of Trust for Public Land. Copyright © 2025 Trust for Public Land.

www.tpl.org