

**United States Department of the Interior**

National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form****1. Name of Property**

Historic name: Lyons Avenue Historic District

Other name/site number: NA

Name of related multiple-property listing: NA

**2. Location**

Street &amp; number: Roughly bounded by Lyons Avenue between Benson and Yates streets

City or town: Houston

State: Texas

County: Harris

Not for publication: NA

Vicinity: NA

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this

☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ localApplicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D

State Historic Preservation Officer

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

*Texas Historical Commission*

State or Federal Agency/Bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal Agency/Bureau or Tribal Government

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register  
☐ determined eligible for the National Register  
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register  
☐ removed from the National Register  
☐ other, explain: NA

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

### Category of Property

<input type="checkbox"/>	building/s
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

### Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
23	9	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
23	9	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 1

## 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions:** DOMESTIC: hotel, secondary structure, single dwelling  
COMMERCE/TRADE: business, restaurant, specialty store  
RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater  
RELIGION: religious facility  
HEALTH CARE: clinic, hospital, medial business/office  
**Current Functions:** DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling, hotel, single dwelling  
COMMERCE/TRADE: business, specialty store  
RELIGION: religious facility  
SOCIAL: civic  
VACANT/NOT IN USE

## 7. Description

**Architectural Classification:** LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN  
MOVEMENTS: Bungalow/Craftsman, Victorian Gothic  
MODERN MOVEMENT: Contemporary, Minimal Traditional, Moderne, Post-war Modern

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OTHER: Commercial  
NO STYLE

**Principal Exterior Materials:** FOUNDATION: CONCRETE, WOOD  
WALLS: WOOD, CONCRETE BLOCK, BRICK, STONE, STUCCO,  
SYNTHETICS  
ROOF: ASPHALT, METAL

**Narrative Description** (see 7-8 to 7-18)

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>A</b>	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>B</b>	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>C</b>	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>D</b>	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations:** NA

**Areas of Significance:** Ethnic Heritage/Black, Social History

**Period of Significance:** ca. 1925 to 1975

**Significant Dates:** 1946–1947 (construction of the Beal Brothers Medical Clinic and St. Elizabeth's Hospital), ca. 1950–ca. 1955 (construction of churches, Louis White Grocery and Coghlan Grocery Store, Eastex Freeway, and Interstate Highway 10)

**Significant Person:** NA

**Cultural Affiliation:** NA

**Architect/Builder:** NA

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see 8-18 to 8-31)

## 9. Major Bibliographic References

**Bibliography** (see 9-32 to 9-38)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** NA

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary location of additional data:** NA

- ☒ State historic preservation office (Texas Historical Commission, Austin)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other – Specify Repository: NA

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**Historic Resources Survey Number:** NA

#### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property:** 15.6 acres

**Latitude/Longitude Bounding Coordinates:** (see continuation sheet 10-39)

**Verbal Boundary Description:** (see continuation sheet 10-39)

**Boundary Justification:** (see continuation sheet 10-39)

#### 11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Brandy Black, Architectural Historian; Adrienne Vaughn Campbell, Architectural Historian  
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Date: January 28, 2026

#### Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see Maps-40 to Maps-44)

**Additional Items** (see Additional Documentation-45 to Additional Documentation-46)

**Photographs** (see Photographs-47 to Photographs-68)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

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## Photograph Log

Lyons Avenue Historic District

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Photographed in August 2025 by Adrienne Campbell and Brandy Black, Stantec

Photograph 1. The Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church, constructed ca. 1940 as the Lyons Theater, at 4030 Lyons Avenue. View facing south.

Photograph 2. Streetview at Lyons Avenue and Benson Street. View facing west.

Photograph 3. The 1955 Louis White Grocery Store at 4101 Lyons Avenue. View facing north.

Photograph 4. Streetview of nonhistoric-age resources along Lyons Avenue near Benson Street. View facing north.

Photograph 5. The ca. 1965 Louis Robey Professional Building at 4120 Lyons Avenue. View facing south.

Photograph 6. Official Texas Historical Marker for Peacock Records at 4120 Lyons Avenue. View facing north.

Photograph 7. Streetview of the Lyons Avenue/Saint Elmo Street intersection with the UPRR. View facing north.

Photograph 8. The 1962 Della Apartments, now the Sunrise Motel, at 4204 Lyons Avenue. View facing southeast.

Photograph 9. The ca. 1925 dwelling at 4211 Lyons Avenue. View facing northwest.

Photograph 10. The ca. 1963 health care facility of Dr. J. S. Stone at 4233 Lyons Avenue. View facing north.

Photograph 11. Streetview of Lyons Avenue at the intersection of Copeland Street. View facing northwest.

Photograph 12. The 1952 Miles Chapel CME Church at 4215 Lyons Avenue. View facing north.

Photograph 13. The nonhistoric-age Fifth Ward Redevelopment Council building at the corner of Lyons Avenue and Copeland Street. View facing southeast.

Photograph 14. Streetview at Lyons Avenue/Waco Street intersection. View facing east.

Photograph 15. The ca. 1925 dwelling at 4408 Lyons Avenue. View facing south.

Photograph 16. The 1955 Coghlan Grocery Store, now the Lyons Grocery Store, at 4410 Lyons Avenue. View facing southeast.

Photograph 17. The 1938 commercial building at 4414 Lyons Avenue. View facing south.

Photograph 18. The 1954 First Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church at 4420 Lyons Avenue. View facing south.

Photograph 19. The 1947 NRHP-listed St. Elizabeth's Hospital at 4514 Lyons Avenue. View facing southwest.

Photograph 20. The 1946 Beal Brothers Medical and Surgical Center, now vacant, at 4519 Lyons Avenue. View facing northwest.

Photograph 21. Streetview at Lyons Avenue/Yates Street intersection. View facing southwest.

Photograph 22. Community garden at 4205 Lyons Avenue. This art installation depicts a timeline of industrial contamination in the Fifth Ward. View facing northeast.

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## **Narrative Description**

The Lyons Avenue Historic District is a 15.6-acre area of approximately eight city blocks along Lyons Avenue in Houston's Fifth Ward, Harris County, Texas. As the Fifth Ward evolved into a predominantly Black community beginning in the second quarter of the twentieth century, Lyons Avenue was its "Main Street," with commercial, cultural, civic, health care, religious, and residential properties. This district, a remnant portion of this once-active "Main Street" and subset of the larger Fifth Ward community, is bounded by parcels along Lyons Avenue from its intersection with Benson Street, extending east along Lyons Avenue to its intersection with Yates Street. Of the district's 32 resources, 23 are contributing buildings constructed between ca. 1925 and ca. 1975. The resources in the nominated district retain sufficient historical and physical integrity to convey Lyons Avenue's significance at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage/Black. The period of significance extends from about 1925, the construction date of the earliest built extant resources, to 1976, 50 years prior to this nomination, thus excluding resources associated with later change and revitalization.

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## **Setting**

The Lyons Avenue Historic District is in Houston, Harris County, Texas, north of Buffalo Bayou in the Fifth Ward (**Figures 1 and 2**). The district is bound by 57 parcels along Lyons Avenue from its intersection at Benson Street, extending east to Yates Street, and one parcel on the south side of Lyons Avenue, west of Benson Street. The district includes the NRHP-listed St. Elizabeth's Hospital at 4514 Lyons Avenue. Commercial, health care, single-family dwellings, and religious resources make up the district, representing remnants of the Black "Main Street" that emerged along Lyons Avenue in the early to mid-twentieth century.

The entire Fifth Ward community encompasses approximately 3,192.5 acres, roughly bounded by Buffalo Bayou on the south, the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) line east of Lockwood Drive on the east, Collingsworth Street on the north, and the Houston Belt and Terminal Railroad (HBT) line and Elysian Street Viaduct on the west (**Figure 4**). The Fifth Ward is largely residential, with a mix of single and multifamily residences, religious properties, small commercial buildings, and other property types, much of which was constructed during the early to mid-twentieth century. Larger, industrial businesses are along the railroad and bayous. Nonhistoric infill, vacant lots, and vacant and deteriorated buildings are interspersed throughout.

## **Layout and Circulation Pattern**

### *Fifth Ward*

The Fifth Ward has an irregular gridded urban layout with rectangular blocks, intersected by several linear transportation corridors. The ward's main east–west surface roadways are Collingsworth Street, Liberty Road, and Lyons Avenue, and the main north–south surface roadways are Jensen Drive, Waco Street, and Lockwood Drive. Railroad lines of the UPRR and HBT extend from northeast to southwest and north to south through the ward. North of the district is the UPRR yard. Interstate Highways 10 and 69 intersect the ward. The western portion of Fifth Ward—between Interstate Highway 69 and the HBT line/the Elysian Viaduct—was physically divided from the rest of the community when the Texas Highway Department (now the Texas Department of Transportation) constructed the Eastex Freeway/U.S. Highway

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59 (now Interstate Highway 69) in the mid-1950s.<sup>1</sup> Once a dense urban residential area, it is now occupied mainly by large industrial buildings. The southern portion of Fifth Ward—between Interstate Highway 10 and Buffalo Bayou—was carved from the rest of the community when the Texas Highway Department constructed Interstate Highway 10 and its interchange with the Eastex Freeway/U.S. Highway 59 from the late 1950s to early 1970s.<sup>2</sup> This area now consists of vacant parcels and nonhistoric multiple- and single-family residential infill, with clusters of industrial complexes concentrated closer to the bayou.

### *Lyons Avenue*

Lyons Avenue extends from McKee Street at its western end through the Fifth Ward to Aleen Street at its eastern end. It intersects five major north–south surface roads: Jensen Drive, Waco Street, Lockwood Drive, Wayside Drive, and McCarty Street. The Elysian Street Viaduct spans over it, as does Interstate Highway 69. Interstate Highway 10 separates Lyons Avenue into two discontinuous segments that dead-end at the interstate frontage roads. Five north–south UPRR and HBT railroad corridors also intersect Lyons Avenue. One of the rail lines intersects the Lyons Avenue Historic District between Benson and Featherstone streets.

The layout of Lyons Avenue is east–west from Aleen Street to Bayou Street, where it turns southwest and parallels the corridor of the UPRR, turning west again between Mary Street and McKee Street. The Fifth Ward endured destructive displacement associated with freeway construction, ultimately being severed by the Eastex Freeway/U.S. Highway 59 and Interstate Highway 10.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the portion of Lyons Avenue within the Fifth Ward (from the Elysian Street Viaduct to the UPRR line east of Lockwood Drive) is different in character on the west and east sides of Interstate Highway 69:

- From McKee Street to Interstate Highway 69, early to mid-twentieth-century industrial buildings flank Lyons Avenue. The busy commercial center with shops, theaters, clubs, hotels, and restaurants that was present from the 1920s through the 1950s was largely abandoned by the late 1960s, with the exception of its entertainment venues.<sup>4</sup> Once a thriving intersection, Lyons Avenue and Jensen Drive is now flanked by two surface parking lots, a stormwater retention pond, and a vacant lot. Its major landmarks are gone, including the Club Matinee (a major music venue) and the associated Crystal Hotel. {Wood, 2003 #19421 }
- From Interstate Highway 69 east to the UPRR line east of Lockwood Drive, Lyons is flanked by a mix of early to mid-twentieth-century buildings, late twentieth to early twenty-first-century infill, and vacant lots. Extant older buildings include single-family residences, churches, mortuaries, a hospital, a pharmacy, a grocery store, movie theaters, a hotel, and other businesses that historically served the community. Some of the late twentieth and early twenty-first-century infill is much larger in scale than the buildings that were present historically.

### *Lyons Avenue Historic District*

Within the historic district, Lyons Avenue is an east–west urban-type street, paved in concrete, with a concrete curb and an intermittent sidewalk on its north and south sides. The sidewalk width varies but

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<sup>1</sup> {Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1956 #9506}

<sup>2</sup> {Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1956 #9506} {Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1962 #9520} {Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1966 #9513} {Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1973 #9518}

<sup>3</sup> {Pando, 2011 #9541} {Emmett, 2024 #11306}

<sup>4</sup> {Pando, 2011 #9541}



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generally has a grass verge between the sidewalk and curb. Most buildings are set back from the sidewalk, with either a lawn or parking lot between the sidewalk and building; a few abut the sidewalk. Parcels on the north side of Lyons Avenue are rectangular, and most are approximately 500 square feet; three parcels at the west end of the district have been subdivided for new development, and two have newly constructed residences. Parcels on the south side of the street are less consistent in size and shape with larger, post-World War II buildings. Residential, commercial, and health care buildings are one to two stories tall, with two taller buildings—the First Shiloh Baptist Church and St. Elizabeth’s Hospital—at the west end of the district. There are 22 vacant parcels in the district, representing historic-age resources that are no longer extant (**Figure 3**).

### **Property Types, Forms, and Construction Dates**

The historic district contains a representative collection of resources of the once-thriving “Main Street” of the Fifth Ward from the 1920s through ca. 1970. The 32 buildings within the district were constructed between about 1900 and 2018, and property types include residential buildings, churches, a hospital, doctor’s offices, a pharmacy, grocery stores, a theater, and other businesses. Of these, 23 are contributing to the district: 6 commercial, 7 single-family domestic, 2 multiple-family domestic, 1 secondary domestic, 4 health care, and 3 religious resources. One impermanent shed/ancillary structure was excluded, in keeping with National Park Service guidelines for counting resources.<sup>5</sup>

The oldest buildings are single-family residences constructed between approximately 1925 and 1940. By 1930, the district comprised mostly single-family residences that lined the north side of Lyons Avenue between Benson and Yates streets. Nearly all these buildings were wood-frame, one-story houses with front porches oriented toward the street. The south side of Lyons Avenue had fewer, scattered residences and vacant land with a no-longer-extant lumber yard adjacent to the UPRR. Both the north and south sides of Lyons Avenue had sidewalks with paved walkways leading from the street to the primary entrance of each dwelling.<sup>6</sup> There are nine extant buildings that were historically single-family residences constructed during this period within the district. All are one-story and wood-frame construction; a few have associated secondary domestic resources such as garages, some with second-story residential units. Most of these properties have undergone typical residential modifications such as replacement cladding, windows, and doors and porch alterations; however, they retain sufficient integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association to convey significance as a collection of historic residential buildings along Lyons Avenue from the period of significance. A few were later modified for commercial or other nonresidential use. The Craftsman bungalows at 4211 Lyons Avenue, 4408 Lyons Avenue, and 4517 Lyons Avenue are representative single-family residences from this time period. Constructed between ca. 1925 and 1930, their typical features include gable-front roofs and integrated porches.

Between 1938 and 1950, commercial buildings and health care facilities had replaced older residences and formerly vacant lots, particularly on the south side of Lyons Avenue. Representative extant commercial buildings and health care facilities built during this time period within the district include two freestanding commercial buildings constructed in 1938 and 1940, a ca. 1940 movie theater, a 1945 hospital, and a 1946 surgical clinic.

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<sup>5</sup> National Park Service, *Evaluating Garages and Outbuildings in Historic Districts*, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Harris County, Texas, 1930; Sanborn Map Company, Houston, Harris County, Texas (ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867–1970), 1924–1951, Fire Insurance Map.

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Development within the district continued into the 1950s with the construction of more commercial buildings and two churches. The construction of the Eastex Highway/U.S. Highway 59 during this time period displaced other residences and businesses. The Prince Hall Masons built the True Level Lodge #226 at 4212 Lyons Avenue (now demolished) when the organization's 1921 building was to be displaced by construction of Interstate Highway 69. Extant representative property types from this period of development within the Lyons Avenue Historic District include two churches constructed in 1952 and 1954, as well as two grocery stores constructed in 1955 and 1956.

During the 1950s, Lyons Avenue and Jensen Drive anchored much of the Fifth Ward businesses and community life, a role that shifted eastward along Lyons Avenue beginning in the 1960s, after the mid-1950s construction of the Eastex Freeway/U.S. Highway 59.<sup>7</sup> This may have spurred some of the development that took place within the district from 1960 to the early 1970s. Representative property types from this period include a ca. 1965 doctor's office and a motel with two buildings constructed in 1962 and 1970. The city also made improvements to roads within the historic district during this period. Between 1966 and 1973, as the adjacent highway system developed, Waco Street was upgraded to an arterial street and widened with a median and additional traffic lanes.<sup>8</sup> Lyons Avenue retains its historical width, even though road improvements during the mid to late twentieth century included repaving, replacing, or adding sidewalks, curbs, or ramps.<sup>9</sup> Much of the streetscape infrastructure from this period is extant.

The mid-1970s and 1980s were a period of socioeconomic and physical decline for the Fifth Ward; the increased mobility of the African American population after desegregation had an unanticipated negative effect on Black-owned businesses and communities in Houston. Migration out of the Fifth Ward, continued expansion of the interstate system, and urban renewal resulted in a trend of displacement and vacancy of residences and businesses, sometimes leading to demolition of abandoned or deteriorated buildings.<sup>10</sup> The 22 vacant lots within the Lyons Avenue Historic District attest to this legacy. Despite this loss, however, some residents and businesses—and, in particular, church congregations and organizations—continued to invest in their buildings and the community.

The last decade of the twentieth century and the first quarter of the twenty-first have been characterized by some renewed investment in the Fifth Ward. Within the Lyons Avenue Historic District, these efforts are seen in the rehabilitation of St. Elizabeth's Hospital for residential use and new construction. In 1989, the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation (FWCRC) was founded to lead neighborhood revitalization. Throughout the 1990s, the FWCRC acquired land for redevelopment and partnered with organizations to build and renovate affordable housing. In 1991, they constructed affordable single-family homes along Lyons Avenue; two are in the boundary of the historic district.<sup>11</sup> In 1998, the FWCRC constructed and moved to the building at 4300 Lyons Avenue; this building also officed U.S Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, who served the 18th Congressional District of Texas from 1995 to 2024. The City of Houston's Housing and Community Development Department rehabilitated the former St. Elizabeth's Hospital at 4514 Lyons Avenue, restoring the building and reopening in 2025 as St.

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<sup>7</sup> Patricia Pando, "In the Nickle: Houston's Fifth Ward," *Houston History Magazine* 2011.

<sup>8</sup> {Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1966 #9513} {Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1973 #9518}

<sup>9</sup> {Nationwide Environmental Title Research, 1947 #9514}

<sup>10</sup> {Pando, 2011 #9541}

<sup>11</sup> Ben DeSoto, Fifth Ward, 1982-2000, MSS 0118, ADD BOX 2, Ben DeSoto Photograph Collection, Box 2, Houston Public Library, African American Research Center at the Gregory School; Pando, "In the Nickle: Houston's Fifth Ward".

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Elizabeth's Place Apartments, an 85-unit affordable residential development.<sup>12</sup> Inspired by the advocacy of community members, the Cane River Community Garden, on a repurposed vacant lot in the historic district at 4205 Lyons Avenue, features an art installation created by the Houston Climate Justice Museum and Cultural Center that illustrates a timeline of industrial contamination in the Fifth Ward.<sup>13</sup> Prompted by the emergence of cancer clusters and years of protest by Fifth Ward residents, the Environmental Protection Agency conducted an investigation from 2023 through 2025 into the historical industrial contamination of soil and groundwater in the Fifth Ward from operations at the UPRR.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the continued advocacy by Fifth Ward residents and supporters, however, loss of the early to mid-twentieth-century buildings is ongoing as hazardous buildings that are deteriorated or damaged by vandalism and vacant buildings that may attract criminal activity are removed. The 2025 demolition of the 1952 True Level Lodge #226 buildings is one example of ongoing demolition.

### **NRHP Boundary Identification**

The intent of this nomination was to select a portion of Lyons Avenue that retains a concentration of resources with sufficient physical and historical integrity to convey their significance as a district and to develop a statement of significance that describes the larger Fifth Ward community's history and development. To identify the district, professional historians and architectural historians conducted a desktop review of Lyons Avenue between Interstate Highway 69 and Lockwood Drive to identify extant historic-age resources with sufficient physical and historical integrity to convey their significance as contributing resources to a historic "Main Street" associated with the Fifth Ward. Field investigations were conducted in August 2025 to document and assess resources in and adjacent to the proposed district boundary (**Figure 1**).

As a result, the Lyons Avenue Historic District boundary contains extant buildings that retain sufficient integrity to convey their historical significance, bounded by parcels fronting Lyons Avenue beginning east of the intersection with Benson Street, extending east along Lyons Avenue to end at its intersection with Yates Street. One historic-age resource at the southwest corner of Benson Street and Lyons Avenue is in the boundary. Two historic-age domestic resources that share a parcel with a historic-age commercial resource at 4414 Lyons Avenue, and one historic-age domestic resource that shares a parcel with a historic-age commercial resource at 1904 Benson Street, are excluded from the proposed boundary since their setback from Lyons Avenue did not align with the intent to focus on resources fronting the street. To the west of Benson and east of Yates streets, parcels along Lyons Avenue outside the district boundary consist mostly of vacant lots, buildings constructed or significantly modified after 1975, or single-family dwellings; those blocks no longer convey significance as segments of a historical Black "Main Street" in the Fifth Ward.

### **Integrity**

Within its boundary, Lyons Avenue Historic District retains integrity to be able to convey its significance as a commercial and cultural corridor in a Black community that developed in the twentieth century. Review of archival documents and historic-period and current maps and aerial photographs shows the continuous progression of development on and around Lyons Avenue between Benson and Yates streets.

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<sup>12</sup> {The City of Houston, 2025 #14500}

<sup>13</sup> {The Houston Climate Justice Museum and Cultural Center, 2026 #14511}

<sup>14</sup> {McClenagan, 2025 #14506}; {U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2026 #14507}

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The Lyons Avenue Historic District exhibits the aspects of integrity necessary for properties listed under Criterion A—location, setting, feeling, and association. The community's setting has experienced a loss of integrity outside the district; however, in the district, the original lot sizes, the placement of houses on their parcels, and the historic pattern of dwellings interspersed with religious and commercial buildings have been retained. True to the historic period, the district retains commercial property types with few buildings from outside the period of significance in its boundary, retaining integrity of setting. The district's integrity of feeling as a Main Street, with commercial, religious, and health care properties interspersed with residential improvements, has been retained. Nonhistoric-age infill construction is mostly appropriately scaled and positioned single-family dwellings. Physical alterations to most individual buildings would not prevent recognition of the district's aesthetic and its integrity of feeling. The district's associative qualities are unmistakable; it maintains a strong integrity of association supported by archival evidence that ties its history to the Fifth Ward community and to Lyons Avenue, historically the core of the Fifth Ward's Black community. Newer improvements, such as the 1998 Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation building at 4300 Lyons Avenue that previously housed offices for U.S. Representative Shelia Jackson Lee, benefit the district by recognizing and celebrating the Fifth Ward's and Lyons Avenue's historic significance to Houston.

The contributing resources in the Lyons Avenue Historic District retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic-period appearances. Their original functions remain evident, and most buildings continue to exhibit historic footprints, forms, fenestration patterns, porch configurations, and roof types. While some materials have been replaced and various modifications have occurred, these changes are typical of the ongoing use of historic buildings. Common residential alterations include replacement of windows, doors, and wall cladding, as well as rear additions, and do not prevent resources from conveying their architectural style and form. Commercial properties show typical updates associated with continued business use, such as roof modifications; changes to signage; and replacement of windows, doors, or exterior cladding. Even with these alterations, they remain readily identifiable as commercial buildings, including those that are currently vacant.

Historic properties and districts may be listed in the National Register under Criterion A when they have an important historical association with significant events, a pattern of events, or trends, if they retain sufficient physical and historical integrity to convey that significance. For this criterion, integrity of setting and the distinctive feeling of a place are the most important aspects of integrity to communicate an eligible property's or district's salient features. Therefore, to be eligible under Criterion A, a property or district must have some intact historic-period physical characteristics to the point where community members would recognize it from its period of significance. There is latitude for a certain level of alterations and loss of integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, but the original design intent should be evident with the presence of character-defining features. For this historic Main Street, the character-defining features include an urban-type street in the city grid system with paved streets and sidewalks and commercial buildings lining the street. The lot size has remained relatively consistent on the north side of the street despite the presence of vacant lots. The historical pattern of building setbacks depended on age of construction, with buildings dating to early in the twentieth century designed for pedestrian access and later in the century for ease of vehicular access; that has also been retained despite the loss of buildings on vacant lots.

Although Lyons Avenue has been substantially altered from its historic period, this district has sufficient integrity to convey its history as a Black "Main Street" in Houston's Fifth Ward. Black historic sites

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throughout the United States commonly exhibit severe loss of historic integrity as these Americans were marginalized and disenfranchised from participation in civic discourse related to decision-making related to issues of public concern. As a result, loss of integrity as defined by National Register standards is in itself is a defining characteristic of historic properties associated with some Black communities.<sup>15</sup>

### Contributing and Noncontributing Resources

Contributing buildings were constructed during the period of significance, ca. 1925 to 1975, and retain integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Despite alterations, they have sufficient material and historical traits common to the neighborhood and therefore retain integrity of their setting or physical environment. They also retain enough of their salient features to be recognizable to the period of significance, despite physical alterations, and therefore have integrity of feeling. The neighborhood street system retains attributes of the location, setting, and feeling of the historical Lyons Avenue corridor. Contributing resources are affiliated with the neighborhood's historical development and convey associative qualities with social history and Black ethnic heritage.

The contributing resources in the Lyons Avenue Historic District have intact physical characteristics with certain acceptable modifications that reflect home or commercial improvement trends. Nevertheless, the original design intent is evident with the presence of character-defining attributes, such as roof forms, fenestration patterns, and form or stylistic details. Alterations and additions should not obscure historic-period stylistic influences or workmanship.

Noncontributing resources detract from the district's character either because they were built after the period of significance or because of extensive modifications including second-story additions, prominent additions on the façade, or notable modifications to fenestration. Five nonhistoric-age resources are noncontributing. Historic resources with modifications that have yielded them noncontributing include the 1930 dwelling at 4110 Lyons Avenue that has replacement windows and cladding, an added carport, an enclosed primary porch, and a rear addition; the ca. 1965 Church's Chicken at 4401 Lyons Avenue with boarded windows and doors, loss or original signage, and identifiable primary entrance; the ca. 1925 dwelling at 4405 Lyons Avenue that has an enclosed primary porch and infilled windows; and the 1940 dwelling at 4415 Lyons Avenue that has been completely modified from its original appearance.

The tabular inventory enumerates each resource in the Lyons Avenue Historic District by street address, current name/description, historic function, year built, architectural style/form, and contributing/noncontributing status (**Table 1**). In all, 23 contributing resources, 9 noncontributing resources, and 22 vacant parcels are in the Lyons Avenue Historic District.

**Table 1. Contributing and Noncontributing Resources in the Lyons Avenue Historic District**

Address	Historical/Current Name	Historic Function	Year Built	Architectural Style/Form	Contributing
1607 Dan Street	Unknown/NA* (Vacant)	Commerce/Business	ca. 1970	No style/Rectangular	Yes
4030 Lyons Avenue	Lyons Theater/Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church	Religion/Religious facility	ca. 1940	No Style/Rectangular	Yes
4101 Lyons Avenue	Louis White Grocery Store/NA (Vacant)	Commerce/Business	1955	Commercial/One-part commercial block	Yes
4105 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	NA	2018	No Style/Rectangular	No

<sup>15</sup> Robert Z. Melnick et al., "Integrity as Process and Feature: Cultural Landscapes of Underrepresented Communities," *Change Over Time* 10, no. 2 (Fall 2021).

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Address	Historical/Current Name	Historic Function	Year Built	Architectural Style/Form	Contributing
4107 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	NA	2018	No Style/Rectangular	No
4110 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)/Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church	Domestic/Single dwelling	1930	No style/Bungalow	No
4120 Lyons Avenue	Louis Robey Professional Building	Health Care/Medical business/office	ca. 1965	Contemporary/Saltbox	Yes
4204 Lyons Avenue	Della Apartment Hotel/Sunrise Motel	Domestic/Hotel	ca. 1970	No style/Rectangular	Yes
4204 Lyons Avenue	Della Apartment Hotel/Sunrise Motel	Domestic/Hotel	1962	No style/L-plan	Yes
4206 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	Domestic/Single dwelling	ca. 1940	No style/Rectangular	Yes
4207 Lyons Avenue	Lyons Prescription Pharmacy	Commerce/Business	ca. 1960	Commercial/Rectangular	Yes
4209 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic)/Reagan's Shoe and Boot Repair	Domestic/Single dwelling, Commerce/Specialty store	ca. 1925	No style/Bungalow	Yes
4211 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	Domestic/Single dwelling	ca. 1925	Craftsman/Bungalow	Yes
4223 Lyons Avenue	Dr. J. S. Stone	Health Care/Clinic	ca. 1963	No style/Rectangular	Yes
4225 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	Domestic/Single dwelling	ca. 1900	Victorian Gothic/Rectangular	Yes
4300 Lyons Avenue	Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Council	NA	1998	Contemporary/Rectangular	No
4315 Lyons Avenue	Porter Institutional/Miles Chapel CME Church	Religion/Religious facility	1952	Post-war Modern/L-plan	Yes
4401 Lyons Avenue	Church's Chicken/Koffey for Cong	Commerce/Restaurant	ca. 1965	Commercial/Irregular	No
4405 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	Domestic/Single dwelling	ca. 1925	Craftsman/Bungalow	No
4408 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	Domestic/Single dwelling	ca. 1925	Craftsman/Bungalow	Yes
4408 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Secondary Structure)	Domestic/Secondary structure	ca. 1930	No style/Rectangular	Yes
4409 Lyons Avenue	Unknown/Golightlys Barber Shop	Commerce/Business	1940	Commercial/L-plan	Yes
4410 Lyons Avenue	Coghlan Grocery Store/Lyons Grocery Store	Commerce/Specialty store	1955	Post-war Modern/Rectangular	Yes
4413 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	Domestic/Single dwelling	1940	Minimal Traditional/Bungalow	Yes
4414 Lyons Avenue	Perfecto Cleaners/Fly Kutz Barber Lounge	Commerce/Specialty store	1938	Commercial/One-part commercial block	Yes
4415 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	Domestic/Single dwelling	1940	No style/Bungalow	No
4420 Lyons Avenue	First Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church	Religion/Religious facility	1954	Post-war Modern/Irregular	Yes
4507 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	NA	1991	No style/Bungalow	No
4514 Lyons Avenue	St. Elizabeth's Hospital/St. Elizabeth Place	Health Care/Hospital	1947	Moderne/U-plan	Yes
4515 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	NA	1991	No style/Bungalow	No
4517 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Single Dwelling)	Domestic/Single dwelling	1930	Craftsman/Bungalow	Yes

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Address	Historical/Current Name	Historic Function	Year Built	Architectural Style/Form	Contributing
4517 Lyons Avenue	NA (Domestic Secondary Structure)	Domestic/Secondary structure	ca. 1963	No style/Rectangular	NA
4519 Lyons Avenue	Beal Brothers Medical and Surgical Clinic/NA (Vacant)	Health Care/Clinic	ca. 1946	Moderne/Rectangular	Yes

\* NA = Not applicable

## Architectural Descriptions for Select Contributing Resources

### 4030 Lyons Avenue (*Photograph 1*)

This ca. 1940 stucco- and stone-clad building has a hipped roof and is now used as the Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church. The building was constructed as the Lyons Theater, which advertised in the *Houston Chronicle* from 1943 to 1951 and was listed in city directories through at least 1956.<sup>16</sup> It was converted for use as a church sometime before 1977.<sup>17</sup> The exterior has been heavily modified by removal of the parapet, replacement of the flat roof with a hipped metal roof with dormer, addition of stone veneer on the façade, a modified main entrance with replacement doors, and a porte-cochère addition at the rear of a side elevation. Windows on side elevations have been enclosed, added, or altered. The original marquee is extant, with signage added to it for the church.

### 4101 Lyons Avenue (*Photograph 3*)

The 1955 Louis White Grocery has a side-gable roof with brick and wood vertical board cladding. It has lost its zigzag canopy. Windows and doors, including its triangular transom windows, are boarded, and the brick is painted. The Louis White Grocery Store was designated a City of Houston Protected Landmark in 2022.<sup>18</sup>

### 4120 Lyons Avenue (*Photograph 5*)

The ca. 1965 Contemporary-style Louis Robey Professional Building has saltbox and shed roofs, full-height vertical windows, stone and engineered wood siding cladding, and a single-door entry on its façade that opens to a central integrated partial-width porch. It is apparent on maps in 1966.<sup>19</sup> Modifications include some replacement cladding. The property has an associated standalone sign and an Official Texas Historical Marker for Peacock Records (Texas Historical Commission Atlas Number 5507016494) in the adjacent public right of way for Lyons Avenue.

### 4204 Lyons Avenue (*Photograph 8*)

The former Della Apartments, now the Sunrise Motel, is composed of two buildings on an L-shaped parcel. The oldest building, fronting Lyons Avenue, is a two-story L-plan building clad in stone, brick, and wood siding panels, with a flat roof with parapet. It has a modified front entrance with an attached wraparound porch with a metal roof and a modified roofline. The rear ca. 1970 two-story building with a hipped roof is clad in brick and wood horizontal board.<sup>20</sup> The buildings have metal stairs leading to

<sup>16</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, "Lyons and DeLuxe Theater Advertisement," March 25, 1943, 13A; "Blue Plate Margarine Movie Treat," January 12, 1951, Page 6 Section 2; Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, *Houston, Texas, City Directory* (U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995. Ancestry.com, 1956).

<sup>17</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, "The Church Directory," (Newspapers.com, February 19 1977; reprint, repr.).

<sup>18</sup> City of Houston, Planning and Development Department, "Louis White Grocery Store, Houston, Harris County, Texas," (2020), Landmark Designation Report.

<sup>19</sup> Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Harris County, Texas, 1966.

<sup>20</sup> Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Harris County, Texas, 1966; Harris County, Texas, 1973.

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second-story balconies and doors to individual units. Original signage has been replaced, and both buildings have replacement windows and doors and painted masonry. Its historical function as a residential hotel appears unchanged.

*4414 Lyons Avenue (Photograph 17)*

This 1938 one-part commercial-block rectangular building is clad in stucco, and its modestly stylized stepped parapet hides a shed roof. The street-facing storefront has three single-door entrances, each flanked with display windows. An awning extends the length of the façade. It has been modified with replacement doors and windows. The building has had several tenants, with Perfecto Cleaners, its longest occupant, using the building from approximately 1958 to at least 1990.<sup>21</sup>

*4420 Lyons Avenue (Photograph 18)*

The Post-war Modern-style First Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church was constructed in 1954. It has an irregular footprint and is clad in brick. Flat-roof one-story wings flank the focal point, a dramatic three-story volume with steeply pitched and slanted winged gable roof. Asymmetrically positioned, the towering façade has a full-height inset panel with three horizontal bands of four vertical metal-frame windows; three full-height buff brick pilasters separate the windows and accentuate verticality. The one-story wings have horizontal bands of clerestory windows under the flat roof's eaves. Another vertical characteristic, an open-frame, five-and-one-half-story bell tower rises from the building's northeast corner. John Saunders Chase Jr., the first African American architect licensed in Texas, designed the building. The church, founded in 1891 in the Fifth Ward, moved to its current location when the building opened.<sup>22</sup> The property has an associated historic-age standalone sign and an Official Texas Historical Marker for the First Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church (Texas Historical Commission Atlas Number 5507017909).

*4514 Lyons Avenue (Photograph 19)*

The NRHP-listed St. Elizabeth's Hospital is a three-story E-plan Art Moderne-style building constructed in several phases between 1945 and 1988 (Texas Historical Commission Atlas Number 2100003489). The original rectangular two-story building opened in 1947, designed by Wyatt C. Hedrick of Texas and Charles H. Lindsley of Mississippi, clad in limestone with a flat roof with parapet and raised basement. It has a flat semicircular canopy and curved sidewalls with glass-block infill. The third floor and the west wing were added in 1958. In 1960, the east wing was added. The rear east and west wings are clad in brick.<sup>23</sup> All windows on the building are non-original fixed single-light aluminum-frame windows. The property has an associated nonhistoric-age standalone sign. Individually listed in the NRHP, the property was rehabilitated as part of a tax credit project and opened as a residential property in 2025.

*4519 Lyons Avenue (Photograph 20)*

This 1946 Art Moderne commercial building has a rectangular plan with rounded corners on its Lyons Avenue façade, is clad in stucco, and has a flat roof with parapet. A two-story wing on the rear has a hipped roof. Historically, the building had glass-block windows at its rounded wall corners and flanking a central entry. Other windows were casement units. A sign was attached to the building below its roofline,

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<sup>21</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, "Perfecto Cleaners Advertisement," July 29, 1958, B5.; {DeSoto, 1989 #11536}

<sup>22</sup> Texas Historical Commission, "First Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas," (2014), Official Texas Historical Marker.

<sup>23</sup> Curry-Shearouse and Mod, "St. Elizabeth's Hospital".



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and a rounded metal canopy extended over the door entrance, accessed on a set of rounded concrete steps. The two-story rear portion of the building may have had a garage door entrance. The façade has been modified with a replacement storefront, now boarded. It no longer has the character-defining glass-block windows, sign, or canopy, and all windows and doors are boarded. The building was constructed as the Beal Brothers Medical and Surgical Clinic, designed by Robbins & Chase and constructed by William J. Kettle. The *Houston Chronicle* described the building as fully air-conditioned and one of the most modern of its kind in Houston. Doctors and brothers Perry W. Beal and Anthony W. Beal were Black surgeons affiliated with St. Elizabeth's Hospital.<sup>24</sup> The clinic had an X-ray lab, fever therapy, electrical treatment devices, conference rooms, a library, and a dispensary.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Chronicle*, "Negro Clinic Being Built"; "Modern Clinic Complete," June 29, 1947, 23A.

<sup>25</sup> *Chronicle*, "Negro Clinic Being Built"; "Modern Clinic Complete".

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### Statement of Significance

The Lyons Avenue Historic District in Houston's Fifth Ward is significant as a Black "Main Street" for the local population for decades. During the early twentieth century, Lyons Avenue had emerged as a "Main Street" with commerce and numerous institutions that supported the Black community. By the mid-twentieth century, Lyons Avenue was the principal Black "Main Street" in Houston. The proposed district is an intact concentration of buildings that reflect the Fifth Ward's residential and commercial development and the significance of Lyons Avenue as a Main Street. Lyons Avenue Historic District is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A at the local level of significance in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage/Black. The period of significance extends from ca. 1925, the construction date of the earliest built extant resources, to 1975, the 50-year cutoff guideline for historical resources; this end date encompasses transformative changes that freeway construction and urban renewal initiatives caused.

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### Houston Wards, 1839 to 1906

Houston, Texas, was founded on August 30, 1836, by brothers Augustus Chapman Allen and John Kirby Allen. They named the city after Samuel Houston, the Texan army general who led the defeat of the Mexican Army at the Battle of San Jacinto, winning the War for Texas Independence, and the first president of the Republic of Texas. The original townsite was developed using enslaved Black labor and Mexican prisoners of war, spanning 62 blocks across a 3-mile plat with Main Street centered along the bluff overlooking Buffalo Bayou's landing. Houston was incorporated in 1837 and briefly served as the temporary capital of the Republic of Texas.<sup>26</sup>

In 1839, Houston established a ward system to designate districts for local aldermen, following municipal governance trends contemporaneously common in America. Throughout the nineteenth century, the wards attracted diverse waves of immigrants, including those of Jewish, Irish, Russian, and Eastern European descent.<sup>27</sup> Unlike typical city council districts defined by population, Houston's wards were divided by geographical features and Congress and Main streets. With approximately 2,500 miles of waterways, Houston earned the appropriate nickname "the Bayou City," and the bayous formed natural boundaries between most wards.<sup>28</sup> The four original wards were arranged around the intersection of Congress and Main streets: the First Ward north of Congress and west of Main, the Second Ward north of Congress and east of Main, the Third Ward south of Congress and east of Main, and the Fourth Ward south of Congress and west of Main.<sup>29</sup>

Following the Civil War, emancipation spurred the creation of new Black communities that became central to the city's early political and cultural development.<sup>30</sup> After Texas seceded from the Union in 1861, Houston served as the military headquarters for the Confederate district of Texas. The city never saw battle, and the practice of enslavement continued locally throughout the war. Although President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, it was not enforced in Texas until June

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<sup>26</sup> Scardino, *Improbable Metropolis*.

<sup>27</sup> Denise Frazier, "The Nickel: A History of African-Descended People in Houston's Fifth Ward," *Genealogy* 4, no. 1 (2020); Scardino, *Improbable Metropolis*.

<sup>28</sup> Scardino, *Improbable Metropolis*.

<sup>29</sup> McComb, *Houston, The Bayou City*; Scardino, *Improbable Metropolis*; Tyina L. Steptoe, *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City* (University of California Press, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> {Pruitt, 2013 #9531}; {Scardino, 2020 #9523}

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19, 1865.<sup>31</sup> Freed people from Brazoria and Fort Bend counties, and from elsewhere in East Texas, began settling north and south of Buffalo Bayou in settlements that became known as “the Bottoms” for their low-lying, flood-prone locations.<sup>32</sup> Freedmen’s Town, in the Fourth Ward, emerged as the initial center of Black political and cultural life in Houston, with Black families purchasing land and building homes there soon after emancipation.<sup>33</sup>

Houston’s population growth after the Civil War drove both the expansion of existing neighborhoods and the creation of new ones.<sup>34</sup> The first railroad reached Houston in 1856, and the city rapidly expanded as a railroad hub following the war. To accommodate attendant population growth, the city added two new wards from the existing wards. In 1866, the Fifth Ward was formed from portions of the First Ward and the Second Ward, bounded by Buffalo Bayou on the south, Lockwood Drive on the east, Liberty Road on the north, and Jensen Drive on the west.<sup>35</sup> The Sixth Ward was formed in 1874 from the northern portion of the Fourth Ward, east of the city’s downtown.<sup>36</sup>

Houston’s wards were originally created as political districts for city governance but over time evolved into distinct social and cultural identities. During segregation, certain wards became designated areas where immigrants, Hispanic individuals, and Black residents were allowed to live, shaping long-lasting patterns in the city’s communities.<sup>37</sup> Unlike some cities, Houston did not develop a single Black neighborhood or district. Instead, Black residents settled across the city, establishing enclaves in each ward. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Black communities in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth wards had become hubs of Black American life.<sup>38</sup> Jim Crow-era<sup>39</sup> segregation confined nonwhite individuals to inferior spaces, and this spatial inequality defined racial boundaries in cities across the country. Terms such as “ghetto,” “bottoms,” and “barrio” became definitions for racialized spaces, linking physical locations to sociopolitical meanings of race and power.

Though Houston’s ward system was abolished in 1906, the enclaves and communities that had formed in them were ingrained with deep bonds to these places. These attachments maintained their importance to local communities, functioning as markers of identity, history, and belonging.<sup>40</sup> Over time, the Fifth Ward acquired a nickname that persists today: The Nickel.<sup>41</sup>

### *The Fifth Ward and Lyons Avenue*

The Fifth Ward was created to accommodate the emerging working class, whose early development was tied to the railroads. The area initially attracted Anglo-American and Northern European immigrant residents and workers, while Black residents settled in the sparsely populated area near the Buffalo Bayou

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<sup>31</sup> Scardino, *Improbable Metropolis*.

<sup>32</sup> Houghton et al., *Houston's Forgotten Heritage: Landscape, Houses, Interiors, 1824–1914*.

<sup>33</sup> Houghton et al., *Houston's Forgotten Heritage: Landscape, Houses, Interiors, 1824–1914*; Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

<sup>34</sup> Houghton et al., *Houston's Forgotten Heritage: Landscape, Houses, Interiors, 1824–1914*.

<sup>35</sup> McComb, *Houston, The Bayou City*; Scardino, *Improbable Metropolis*; {Wagner, 2011 #14494}

<sup>36</sup> {Wagner, 2011 #14494}

<sup>37</sup> {Chapman, 2011 #14495}

<sup>38</sup> Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*; Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

<sup>39</sup> The Jim Crow era was a period of legal, race-based segregation, generally understood as extending from the end of post-Civil War Reconstruction in 1877 to the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. For more information, see C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>40</sup> Pando, “In the Nickle: Houston’s Fifth Ward”; Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*; Tyina L. Steptoe, *Fifth Ward Houston, Texas, Black Past*, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Frazier, “The Nickel: A History of African-Descended People in Houston’s Fifth Ward”; Pando, “In the Nickle: Houston’s Fifth Ward”.

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and east of the Fifth Ward outside the city limits.<sup>42</sup> In 1870, the Fifth Ward had 1,139 residents; more than half, 578, were Black.<sup>43</sup> White residents were primarily Irish, Jewish, and German immigrants. By 1880, Mexican immigrants began settling in the area.<sup>44</sup> In 1880, the Southern Pacific Railroad was constructed through Houston, and it established its yard and maintenance shops in the Fifth Ward, providing an economic foundation for local workers through the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>45</sup> Buffalo Bayou remained a natural barrier between the Fifth Ward and the city until 1883, when a drawbridge at San Jacinto Street was built for easier access into the city.<sup>46</sup>

The development of Lyons Avenue in the 1890s was a catalyst for eastward expansion in the Fifth Ward. Construction of Lyons Avenue began in September 1894. The 60-foot-wide street extended 1,600 feet inside the city limits, then continued more than 1 mile eastward, facilitating Fifth Ward development east of Benson Street through the early twentieth century.<sup>47</sup> Lyons Avenue was named after John Lyons, an Irish immigrant and Fifth Ward resident who was a real estate investor and proprietor of both the Lyons House and the Star and Crescent Hotel in the Fifth Ward. The Lyons House was a boarding house and dining establishment that catered primarily to railroad workers from the nearby Southern Pacific Railroad.<sup>48</sup>

In 1913, John Lyons had acquired much of the land between present-day Benson and Yates streets (**Figure 5**).<sup>49</sup> Although Benson Street appeared on maps as early as 1913, no streets were yet platted to intersect Lyons Avenue east of Benson Street. The city limits were expanded through the early twentieth century, gradually moving east. By 1928, Lyons Avenue stretched east to Pearl Street, and Copeland, Waco, Tralle, Dan, and Elman (now Yates) streets were mapped. By 1930, the city had expanded its boundaries farther eastward; this extension incorporated all the land in the district.<sup>50</sup>

By this time, Black migrants from rural Texas and Louisiana seeking urban economic opportunities had transformed the Fifth Ward into a predominantly Black neighborhood. Single-family residences, churches, and businesses associated with Black Houstonians would eventually occupy the community's major thoroughfares, including Lyons Avenue.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Fifth Ward, 1900 to 1940**

The Fifth Ward's proximity to the railroads and the city's east-end industrial district made it an appealing place for Black migrants to settle as Houston's post-World War I growth accelerated through industrial expansion and the arrival of job-seeking ruralites.<sup>52</sup> A new wave of Black migration brought thousands of African Americans to Houston from surrounding rural communities as they traded agricultural labor for

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<sup>42</sup> Dorothy Knox Howe Houghton et al., *Houston's Forgotten Heritage: Landscape, Houses, Interiors, 1824–1914* (Rice University Press via Internet Archive, 1991); Scardino, *Improbable Metropolis*.

<sup>43</sup> Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz, *Black Dixie : Afro-Texan history and culture in Houston* (Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 23; Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*.

<sup>44</sup> Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*; Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

<sup>45</sup> Kleiner, "Exploring the Rich History and Culture of Houston's Fifth Ward"; Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*; Scardino, *Improbable Metropolis*.

<sup>46</sup> *Houston Post*, "The Face of Houston," February 9, 1964, page 6 section 2.

<sup>47</sup> Pollard Porter, and Ruby, Official Map of the City of Houston (Harris County Archives), 1890.

<sup>48</sup> Find A Grave, John Lyons, Memorial 107164786, 2013; *Galveston Daily News*, "Lyons Avenue Opened," September 26, 1894, 3.

<sup>49</sup> Houston Title Guaranty Company, City of Houston Texas, 1913.

<sup>50</sup> Association, Houston Adjacent Subdivision Map, 1930.

<sup>51</sup> Diana J. Kleiner, "Exploring the Rich History and Culture of Houston's Fifth Ward," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2020; Bernadette Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration: The Movement of Rural African Americans to Houston, 1900–1941*, Sam Rayburn Series on Rural Life, (Texas A&M University Press, 2013).

<sup>52</sup> {Pruitt, 2013 #9531}

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industrial and domestic work.<sup>53</sup> Between 1910 and 1930, Houston's population experienced substantial growth, rising from 78,800 to 292,352. During the same period, the city's Black population grew from just under 24,000 in 1910 to more than 63,000 in 1930.<sup>54</sup> Although Houston's Black population more than doubled between 1910 and 1930, the city's overall population expanded at an even faster pace. As a result, the proportion of Black residents declined from about 30 percent to around 21 percent of the total population. The expansion of rail lines and the development of the Houston Ship Channel were central to population growth, creating an abundance of industrial and manufacturing jobs.<sup>55</sup> By 1930, Black Houstonians working as switchmen, firemen, and brakemen made up one-third of skilled railroad workers.<sup>56</sup>

A combination of migration, displacement, and industrial development reshaped the Fifth Ward into a predominantly Black area by the 1930s.<sup>57</sup> This transition began with the 1912 Great Fifth Ward Fire that burned much of the neighborhood.<sup>58</sup> The area was rebuilt with increased industrial density, a pattern enabled by Houston's lack of regulated planning and zoning. Most cities used these tools to manage growth and balance private and public real estate interests by regulating land use. The absence of zoning disproportionately affected neighborhoods near Buffalo Bayou, where residential tracts became interspersed with imposing manufacturing and industrial sites, railroad stations and sidelines, and warehouses.<sup>59</sup> In the aftermath of the fire, many white residents moved to Houston suburbs. Meanwhile, Black migrants from Louisiana and East Texas settled in the Fifth Ward, transforming it into a largely Black community.<sup>60</sup> The Fifth Ward Black population had grown from 9,397 in 1920 to 25,923 by 1940.<sup>61</sup> Many migrants were Black Louisianans displaced by the 1927 Great Mississippi Flood who came to Houston for industrial job opportunities and settled on the northern edge of the Fifth Ward. These French-speaking Black Creole families claimed the area around Erastus and Collingsworth streets, establishing Frenchtown by the 1930s.<sup>62</sup> Residential sections of the Fifth Ward housed Black railroad and industrial workers, dock workers, and domestic workers.<sup>63</sup>

As a thoroughfare through the ward, Lyons Avenue became its commercial corridor, and by 1925, 40 Black-owned businesses anchored the neighborhood between Jensen and Lockwood drives.<sup>64</sup> The 1930 city directory listed 7 businesses along Lyons Avenue between Benson and Yates (then Elman) streets, growing to 24 by 1940 (**Table 2**).<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*, 3.

<sup>54</sup> William Henry Keller, *Make Haste Slowly: Moderates, Conservatives, and School Desegregation in Houston* (Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 19.; {U.S. Department of the Interior, 1910 #14496} {U.S. Department of the Interior, 1930 #14497}

<sup>55</sup> Kleiner, "Exploring the Rich History and Culture of Houston's Fifth Ward"; Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

<sup>56</sup> Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*.

<sup>57</sup> Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*; Kleiner, "Exploring the Rich History and Culture of Houston's Fifth Ward".

<sup>58</sup> Frazier, "The Nickel: A History of African-Descended People in Houston's Fifth Ward"; Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*.

<sup>59</sup> Scardino, *Improbable Metropolis*.

<sup>60</sup> Frazier, "The Nickel: A History of African-Descended People in Houston's Fifth Ward".

<sup>61</sup> Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*, 76.

<sup>62</sup> Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie : Afro-Texan history and culture in Houston*; Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*; Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

<sup>63</sup> Scardino, *Improbable Metropolis*.

<sup>64</sup> Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*; Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

<sup>65</sup> Association, Houston Adjacent Subdivision Map, 1930; Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, *Houston, Texas, City Directory* (U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995. Ancestry.com, 1930); *Houston, Texas, City Directory* (U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995. Ancestry.com, 1940).

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**Table 2. Lyons Avenue Businesses in 1930 and 1940 City Directories**

Name/Business	Intersection	Address	Year
Burke Lumber Company	Lyons Ave. and Benson St.	4118–4120 Lyons Ave.	1930
P. W. Watts/Drug Store	Lyons Ave. and Benson St.	4119–4121 Lyons Ave.	1930
G. H. Moore/Restaurant	Lyons Ave. and San Antonio & Aransas Pass Railroad	4201 Lyons Ave.	1930
Edward Loonam/Grocery	Lyons Ave. and Copeland St.	4300 Lyons Ave.	1930
Michale Bus/Grocery	Lyons Ave. and Tralle St.	4412 Lyons Ave.	1930
Thomas Blake/Grocery	Lyons Ave. and Dan St.	4520 Lyons Ave.	1930
R. Shelton/Barber	Lyons Ave. and Dan St.	4521 Lyons Ave.	1930
Louis White Grocery	Lyons Ave. and Benson St.	4101 Lyons Ave.	1940
Louis White Service Station	Lyons Ave. and Benson St.	4102 Lyons Ave.	1940
Hailey Lumber Company	Lyons Ave. and Benson St.	4116–4118 Lyons Ave.	1940
Fred Marshall/Printers	Lyons Ave. and Benson St.	4121 Lyons Ave.	1940
Lyons Avenue Eat Shop	Lyons Ave. and Featherstone St.	4201 Lyons Ave.	1940
Ellen's Place Restaurant	Lyons Ave. and Featherstone St.	4201 Lyons Ave.	1940
Thompson Drug Store	Lyons Ave. and Featherstone St.	4202 Lyons Ave.	1940
Thompson Service Station	Lyons Ave. and Featherstone St.	4202 Lyons Ave.	1940
Leon Powell/Barber	Lyons Ave. and Featherstone St.	4202 1/2 Lyons Ave.	1940
Jacquet's Tasty Shop/Confectioners	Lyons Ave. and Copeland St.	4303 Lyons Ave.	1940
Lyons Avenue Beauty Salon	Lyons Ave. and Copeland St.	4311 Lyons Ave.	1940
Lang's Place Dry Cleaners	Lyons Ave. and Copeland St.	4312 Lyons Ave.	1940
Lang's Café	Lyons Ave. and Copeland St.	4312 Lyons Ave.	1940
Lang's Service Station	Lyons Ave. and Copeland St.	4312 Lyons Ave.	1940
Lang's Ice Cream Shop	Lyons Ave. and Copeland St.	4312 Lyons Ave.	1940
Your City Soda Company	Lyons Ave. and Waco St.	4407 Lyons Ave.	1940
Le Blanc Drug Store	Lyons Ave. and Waco St.	4407 Lyons Ave.	1940
Joyce Cleaners	Lyons Ave. and Waco St.	4407 Lyons Ave.	1940
Bua's Grocery and Market	Lyons Ave. and Tralle St.	4412 Lyons Ave.	1940
Dorn and Dorn Furniture	Lyons Ave. and Tralle St.	4416 Lyons Ave.	1940
Paul's Shoe Shop	Lyons Ave. and Tralle St.	4417 1/2 Lyons Ave.	1940
Avalon Barbecue Inn	Lyons Ave. and Dan St.	4520 Lyons Ave.	1940
Wynne's Service Shop	Lyons Ave. and Yates St.	4601 Lyons Ave.	1940
Centennial Grill	Lyons Ave. and Yates St.	4603 Lyons Ave.	1940

Although predominantly Black by this time, Jewish and Italian immigrants also lived and worked in the area. The presence of European immigrants in or near Black neighborhoods was common during this period, as anti-immigrant sentiment following World War I similarly limited their housing options.<sup>66</sup> Immigrant business owners often welcomed Black consumers and frequently advertised in Black newspapers, creating a degree of commercial integration amid a segregated landscape.<sup>67</sup> Italian

<sup>66</sup> Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*.

<sup>67</sup> Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

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immigrants, the Bua and Coghlan<sup>68</sup> families each operated grocery stores on Lyons Avenue.<sup>69</sup> No longer extant, the Bua Grocery and Market operated at 4112 Lyons Avenue at least through the mid-1940s.<sup>70</sup> By 1960, the Coghlan Grocery Store was at 4410 Lyons Avenue; in operation today, it is the Lyons Grocery Store.<sup>71</sup>

During the Jim Crow era, Black Houstonians were unwelcome consumers on Main Street in downtown Houston. When permitted access to shops, they had to use separate entrances and service was inferior to that of which other patrons received. Out of necessity, Black entrepreneurs developed “Main Streets” with businesses and services in their enclaves and neighborhoods. These were safe spaces to sell and purchase goods, develop economic independence, and build community autonomy. These Black “Main Streets” successfully catered to the daily business, shopping, services, financial, lodging, religious, and cultural needs of African Americans who were otherwise excluded from white-owned businesses and organizations.<sup>72</sup> By the 1930s, the Fourth Ward was the city’s largest Black economic hub, home to 95 percent of Black-owned businesses, with similar, if smaller, commercial corridors developing in the Third Ward along Dowling Street and in the Fifth Ward on Lyons Avenue.<sup>73</sup>

Churches were a common part of Black “Main Street” as anchors of the community. Since they offered opportunities for shared worship experiences and social gatherings, church congregations created networks for political and charitable activities.<sup>74</sup> In 1865, Black residents in the Fifth Ward established the Mount Vernon United Methodist Church, which remains active today. Five other Fifth Ward congregations have histories spanning more than a century: the Pleasant Grove Baptist, Mount Pleasant Baptist, Sloan Memorial United Methodist, Payne Chapel Methodist, and First Shiloh Missionary Baptist churches.<sup>75</sup> The First Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church at 4420 Lyons Avenue is in the district.

Entertainment venues were similarly common on Black “Main Streets”. A growing city with a swelling Black population, Houston attracted traveling Black musicians seeking audiences and income. Professional musicians were supported by urban wages that helped build a viable music scene after World War I. A form of blues music flourished in Texas during the Jazz Age—a mix of Texas blues, piano blues, ragtime, and zydeco.<sup>76</sup> Following World War I, Black dance halls and music clubs in Houston featured both local artists and touring bands. By 1930, Houston had developed an infrastructure for Black entertainment that bolstered Black consumerism.<sup>77</sup>

### **Lyons Avenue in the Fifth Ward, 1940s to 1960s**

At mid-century, Houston’s burgeoning Black population relied on segregated commercial and cultural corridors for the activities of daily life. From 1940 to 1950, Houston’s population increased from 384,514 to 596,163. The Black population expanded about 45 percent, increasing from 86,302 to 125,400; the

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<sup>68</sup> The store and surname appears with multiple spellings, including Coughland, Coughlin, and Coughlan, with Coghlan the most common usage.

<sup>69</sup> Houston Chronicle, “Armour’s Star Franks Now on Sale at These Fine Food Stores,” (Newspapers.com, January 21 1960; reprint, repr.); Houston Post, “The Face of Houston,” June 14, 1938, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Houston Post, “Save Used Household Fats for Ammunition,” October 29, 1948, Page 2 section 2.

<sup>71</sup> Chronicle, “Armour’s Star Franks Now on Sale at These Fine Food Stores”.

<sup>72</sup> Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*; Steptoe, *Houston Bound.*; {Hanchett, 2020 #14515}

<sup>73</sup> Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie : Afro-Texan history and culture in Houston*; Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*; Steptoe, *Houston Bound.*

<sup>74</sup> Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*.

<sup>75</sup> Kleiner, “Exploring the Rich History and Culture of Houston’s Fifth Ward”.

<sup>76</sup> Kleiner, “Exploring the Rich History and Culture of Houston’s Fifth Ward”; Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*; Steptoe, *Houston Bound.*

<sup>77</sup> Steptoe, *Houston Bound.*

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proportion in the total population remained around 21 percent.<sup>78</sup> Entrepreneurs opened businesses and services to accommodate this population growth and benefit financially. The Lyons Avenue commercial corridor expanded with Black-owned movie theaters, motels, eateries, groceries, and shops. The corridor solidified the Fifth Ward as a place where families could live comfortably, be served and entertained, and participate in communal institutions and organizations.<sup>79</sup> During the period, Lyons Avenue had replaced the Fourth Ward's San Felipe Road (now West Dallas Street) as Houston's prominent Black Main Street.<sup>80</sup>

### *Commerce*

By the 1950s, several businesses lined Lyons Avenue between Benson and Yates streets: four restaurants, two filling stations, two grocery stores, an icehouse, a furniture store, a confectioner's shop, a dry cleaners, and 19 other stores or businesses.<sup>81</sup> Several of these commercial buildings remain extant, reflecting the corridor's role as a neighborhood commercial hub. The Lyons Theater, at 4030 Lyons Avenue, was constructed around 1940 and operated until the mid-1950s; the building now serves as the Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church.<sup>82</sup> By 1940, Louis White owned and operated his eponymous grocery store at 4101 Lyons Avenue; the original building was replaced in 1955 and is extant.<sup>83</sup> Two commercial blocks at the Lyons Avenue/Tralle Street intersection housed more commerce: the 1940 building at 4409 Lyons Avenue, now Golightly's Barber Shop, and the 1938 building at 4414 Lyons Avenue that housed Perfecto Cleaners from the 1950s–1990s, now Fly Kutz Barber Lounge.<sup>84</sup> The Coghlan Grocery Store at 4410 Lyons Avenue, now Lyons Grocery Store, was constructed in about 1955. By 1962, the Della Apartment Hotel, now the Sunrise Motel, was constructed at 4204 Lyons Avenue. Reagan's Shoe and Boot Repair at 4209 Lyons Avenue operated from a converted dwelling by the early 1970s.<sup>85</sup> In addition, five extant health care facilities and three churches contributed to the setting of this corridor.

### *Health Care*

During the Jim Crow era, segregation severely restricted health care access for Black Houstonians, as most hospitals only permitted white physicians and limited care for Black patients to segregated wards. To address this, Black physicians and communities established their own hospitals and health care facilities. People's Sanitarium, established in 1911 on Andrews Street in the Fourth Ward, was an early local facility. In 1919, Black physicians founded Union Hospital at Howard and Nash streets in the Fourth Ward with six beds and an operating room.<sup>86</sup> By 1923, it had relocated to Andrews Street and was renamed the Union-Jeremiah Hospital. As overcrowding persisted, hospital founders and Black physicians lobbied for a larger facility. Their advocacy led to the 1927 opening of the Houston Negro

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<sup>78</sup> Keller, *Make Haste Slowly: Moderates, Conservatives, and School Desegregation in Houston*, 9.; {U.S. Department of the Interior, 1940 #14498} {U.S. Department of the Interior, 1950 #14499}

<sup>79</sup> Frazier, "The Nickel: A History of African-Descended People in Houston's Fifth Ward"; Pando, "In the Nickle: Houston's Fifth Ward"; Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

<sup>80</sup> Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie: Afro-Texan history and culture in Houston*, 164; Pando, "In the Nickle: Houston's Fifth Ward".

<sup>81</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Houston, Harris County, Texas, 1924–1951.

<sup>82</sup> *Chronicle*, "Lyons and DeLuxe Theater Advertisement"; "Blue Plate Margarine Movie Treat".

<sup>83</sup> Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, *Houston, Texas, City Directory*.

<sup>84</sup> *Chronicle*, "Perfecto Cleaners Advertisement"; *Houston Post*, "Personals," January 6, 1949, C4.

<sup>85</sup> Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Harris County, Texas, 1966; Harris County, Texas, 1973.

<sup>86</sup> Houston Public Library, Union Hospitals, MSS 0178, Box 1, Folder 2, Vertical Files, Houston, Medical Hospitals, Houston Public Library, African American Research Center at the Gregory School, n.d.



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Hospital, later renamed Riverside General Hospital.<sup>87</sup> By the early 1940s, the city provided fewer than 200 hospital beds to serve all Black Houstonians. This severe shortage prompted local Black doctors, civic leaders, and the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception to raise funds for a facility. On May 18, 1947, the 60-bed St. Elizabeth's Hospital opened at 4514 Lyons Avenue in the Fifth Ward with an integrated staff of Black and white nurses, nuns, and physicians.<sup>88</sup> St. Elizabeth's Hospital underwent decades of transformation from expansion and desegregation.<sup>89</sup>

The nation gradually advanced toward civil rights with legislation that promoted health care equality. In 1946, Congress passed the Hill-Burton Act, which provided federal funding for building and upgrading hospitals. The act had a separate-but-equal provision that allowed hospitals access to federal funds as long as they treated Black and white patients with equality. Following the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that struck down segregated education, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed suit to eliminate the same doctrine in hospitals, but the court declined to review its case. A breakthrough came in 1964 when a second NAACP lawsuit resulted in an appeals court decision in *Simkins v. Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital*, which formally struck down segregation in hospitals. Under President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Office of Equal Health Opportunity in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was tasked with determining whether hospitals were eligible for federal funding under newly established Medicare and Medicaid programs, furthering the desegregation of health care facilities.<sup>90</sup>

Houston's Black residents and practitioners opened medical facilities along Lyons Avenue, between Benson and Yates streets, adding depth of services to the "Main Street" corridor. Medical offices and facilities included the 1946 Beal Brothers Surgical Center at 4120 Lyons Avenue, the 1963 office of Dr. J. S. Stone at 4223 Lyons Avenue, the ca. 1965 office of Dr. Louis Robey at 4120 Lyons Avenue, and the ca. 1960 Lyons Prescription Pharmacy at 4207 Lyons Avenue. The practitioners—the Beal brothers, Louis R. Robey, and J. S. Stone, among others—who operated these clinics became leaders in medicine, imparting distinction to this Black Main Street.

The Beal Brothers Surgical Center at 4120 Lyons Avenue, directly across from St. Elizabeth's Hospital and constructed in 1946, was established by Black physicians and brothers, Texas-born Anthony Wayne Beal and Perry Weldon Beal. Both graduated from the private historically Black Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. Perry completed his medical degree in 1935, moved to Houston the following year, and established a practice. Anthony followed in 1943, completing his residency at Homer G. Phillips Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri, the only public hospital for Black patients in that city, before joining his brother in 1945. In 1950, both pursued advanced medical training at the University of Texas postgraduate school of medicine at Houston's Texas Medical Center. The Beal brothers practiced at several Houston institutions, including Riverside General Hospital in the Third Ward and St. Elizabeth's

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<sup>87</sup> Mariah Jade Zimpfer, "Riverside General Hospital: A Legacy of Care for Houston's Underserved," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2022.

<sup>88</sup> Curry-Shearouse and Mod, "St. Elizabeth's Hospital".

<sup>89</sup> Overcrowding led to expansion between 1958 and 1965. In 1966, St. Elizabeth's received Medicare certification as part of federal desegregation efforts, securing vital funding. The Missionary Sisters operated the hospital until 1981, when the Houston-based Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word took over and ran it until closing in 1988. A group of local doctors briefly reopened it as Drew Medical Center in 1989, but it closed again in 1990. The building served as a drug rehabilitation facility starting in 1992, then became the Barbara Jordan Healthcare Facility under the Riverside General Hospital system in 1996. After years of changing ownership, the facility permanently closed in 2014.

<sup>90</sup> Curry-Shearouse and Mod, "St. Elizabeth's Hospital"; Jonathan Martin, *Simkins v. Cone* (1963), North Carolina History Project, 2025.

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Hospital in the Fifth Ward.<sup>91</sup> Both became leaders in medical organizations: Perry served as president of the Houston Medical Association, vice president of the National Medical Association, and director of the Houston Negro Chamber of Commerce; Anthony eventually became a regional director for the National Medical Association and president of the Houston Medical Forum.<sup>92</sup> After Perry relocated to Los Angeles in mid-1952, he continued practicing medicine and served as president of the Medical, Dental, and Pharmaceutical Association.<sup>93</sup> At the time of its construction, the Beals' clinic served Black patients in "... one of the most modernly equipped clinics of its kind in Houston." Designed by architects Robbins & Chase and built by contractor William J. Kettle, the fully air-conditioned one-and-a-half-story brick and masonry building had 22 rooms, including an X-ray laboratory, patient conference rooms, a library, and a dispensary.<sup>94</sup>

The obstetrics and gynecology office that Dr. J. S. Stone operated was at 4223 Lyons Avenue beginning around 1960. After graduating from Meharry Medical College in 1956, Stone settled in Houston's Fifth Ward; by 1963, he had built an obstetrics and gynecology facility in front of his home.<sup>95</sup> Over the course of his career, he was president of the Houston Medical Forum, founded the St. Elizabeth's Hospital of Houston Foundation, contributed to numerous city boards, and later became a licensed funeral director.<sup>96</sup>

Dr. Louis R. Robey established a clinic at 4120 Lyons Avenue around 1965. Son of local music entrepreneur Don D. Robey, he graduated from Meharry Medical College. He had established his medical practice in Houston in 1955, affiliated with St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Houston Negro Hospital, and Lockwood Hospital.<sup>97</sup> By 1957, he was chief of surgery, and by 1959, he had been elected president of staff at both the Houston Negro and St. Elizabeth's hospitals.<sup>98</sup> That year, Robey became the first Black physician in Texas elected to the American College of Surgeons at its 45th annual congress.<sup>99</sup>

At least one other health care-related business in the district was the Lyons Prescription Pharmacy at 4207 Lyons Avenue, constructed around 1960. It housed several Fifth Ward businesses over the years including the Pollards Fish Market during the late 1960s.<sup>100</sup> By 1971, the location had transformed into the Lyons Prescription Pharmacy, announced in the *Houston Chronicle* that year.<sup>101</sup>

### *Entertainment*

The Fifth Ward was a pivotal location for entertainment venues as rhythm and blues music took the stage. Louisiana-born Louis Wilton Dickerson owned the first venue in the Fifth Ward, Club Matinee on Lyons Avenue, next door to the Crystal Hotel. Don D. Robey opened the Bronze Peacock Dinner Club on Erastus Street in the Fifth Ward, an integrated space in a legally segregated city that promoted rhythm and

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<sup>91</sup> Shawna D. Williams, "Perry Weldon Beal: Pioneer African American Physician," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2017; "Anthony Wayne Beal: Pioneer Physician and Civil Rights Activist," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2020.

<sup>92</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, "Dr. A. W. Beal Heads Local Medical Forum," December 8, 1950, C3.

<sup>93</sup> Williams, "Perry Weldon Beal: Pioneer African American Physician".

<sup>94</sup> *Chronicle*, "Negro Clinic Being Built"; *Chronicle*, "Modern Clinic Complete".

<sup>95</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, "Negro Doctors Back Sit-Ins Youth Group," February 26, 1961, Page 20 Section 21; Nationwide Environmental Title Research, Excerpt of Harris County, Texas, 1976, Aerial Image.

<sup>96</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, "Dr. J. S. Stone," January 10, 2015, Obituary.

<sup>97</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, "Negro Doctor is Honored by Surgeons," October 7, 1959, Page 1 Section 2.

<sup>98</sup> *Houston Post*, "Wonder Drugs called Wrong for Some Patients," June 11, 1957, page 6 section 1; "Dr. Robey First is Houston's Negro in Surgeons Society," October 7, 1959, page 13 section 11.

<sup>99</sup> *Post*, "Dr. Robey First is Houston's Negro in Surgeons Society".

<sup>100</sup> *Houston Post*, "H. Mewhinney: Kountze's Claim to an Exclusive Commodity is Challenged," February 6, 1967, Page 3 section 3.

<sup>101</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, "Pharmacy," (Newspapers.com, April 11 1971; reprint, repr.).

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blues performers and attracted white patrons. The club became part of the national touring circuit for Black performers and bands.<sup>102</sup> In 1949, Robey founded Peacock Records to record Texas blues guitarist Clarence “Gatemouth” Brown. Peacock Records was influential locally and on the national scene. In 1953, Robey purchased the Memphis-based Duke Records label and other smaller labels, forming Duke-Peacock Records.<sup>103</sup> The building was at 4104 Lyons Avenue before its demolition.<sup>104</sup> Other music clubs in the Fifth Ward were the De Luxe or Roxy and Club Paradise. Louisiana Creole musicians in Frenchtown popularized zydeco music in Houston. The Continental Ballroom, founded by Doris McClendon, opened in 1951. More juke joints and zydeco clubs followed, including Alfred’s Place, owned by Curley Cormier and opened in 1962, which promoted local zydeco bands.<sup>105</sup>

### *Religious*

Three churches were established on Lyons Avenue at mid-century. The Porter Institutional Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church was built in 1952 at 4315 Lyons Avenue. Miles Chapel CME Church had become the occupant by 1951.<sup>106</sup> The First Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church was constructed at 4420 Lyons Avenue in 1954; founded in 1891, the congregation is among the oldest in Fifth Ward.<sup>107</sup> Founded in 1953, the Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church converted the Lyons Theater at 4030 Lyons Avenue into its facility in about 1977.<sup>108</sup>

### *Social*

Buildings along Lyons Avenue, as a Black “Main Street,” housed social establishments. Social organizations that sought to improve the quality of life for Black Americans included fraternal lodges. The first organized in Texas was the 1871 Prince Hall Grand Lodge founded in Galveston. Soon after, local fraternal and sororal chapters formed across the state. Civic and political agendas forwarded their ideals with practical benefits to members that included life insurance and death benefits.<sup>109</sup> In the Fifth Ward, the True Level Lodge #226, organized in 1906, occupied the ca. 1952 True Level Building at 4212 Lyons Avenue until its 2025 demolition.<sup>110</sup>

## **Desegregation and Lyons Avenue**

Several Black physicians with offices located in the district played a key role during the civil rights movement, helping elevate Lyons Avenue as a Black Main Street. During the 1950s, Black physicians challenged segregation in the courts, fighting discrimination that extended far beyond health care. In 1950, Dr. Anthony Beal joined four other Black golfers in filing a federal district court lawsuit against the city after being denied access to Houston’s Hermann Park Golf Course.<sup>111</sup> The district court initially ruled

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<sup>102</sup> Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

<sup>103</sup> Pando, “In the Nickle: Houston’s Fifth Ward.”; An Official Texas Historical Marker (Texas Historical Commission Atlas Number 5507016494) commemorates Robey and Peacock Records at the neighboring 4120 Lyons Avenue

<sup>104</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, “Robey’s Place in R&B History Goes on REcord,” April 16, 2011, 1A; Texas Historical Commission, “Peacock Records, Houston, Harris County, Texas,” (2010), Official Texas Historical Marker.

<sup>105</sup> {Steptoe, 2015 #9524}

<sup>106</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Houston, Harris County, Texas, Volume 8, Sheet 829 (ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867–1970), 1924–1951, Fire Insurance Map.

<sup>107</sup> Texas Historical Commission, “First Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, Houston, Harris County, Texas”.

<sup>108</sup> Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church, About Us, 2025.

<sup>109</sup> Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1525–1995* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*.

<sup>110</sup> True Level Lodge #226, History, 2025.

<sup>111</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, “Golf, Continued,” June 3, 1954, A7; *Houston Post*, “Negro Golfers Plat at 2 Public Courses,” June 3, 1954, page 2 section 3.

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against them, but their determination proved fruitful when the circuit court reversed the decision in 1951. The city subsequently appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled on the case during its 1953–1954 term and upheld the right to bar Black citizens from municipal golf courses.<sup>112</sup> However, in May of 1954, the Houston City Council unanimously voted to end segregation of three municipal golf courses. Beal was among the first Black golfers permitted to play at Hermann Park following the ruling, a milestone in the desegregation of Houston's public facilities.<sup>113</sup>

Black physicians were community leaders, using their resources and influence to confront segregation and advance social change throughout the 1960s.<sup>114</sup> The Houston Medical Forum, a local organization for Black physicians, was a financial supporter of the Progressive Youth Association.<sup>115</sup> In 1960, students from Texas Southern University (TSU) in Houston had established the Progressive Youth Association, led by TSU student Eldrewey Stearnes. On March 4, 1960, Stearnes and 13 fellow TSU students organized Houston's first sit-in at the lunch counter at Weingarten's Grocery Store to protest segregation.<sup>116</sup> Later that year, a group of students were arrested after a sit-in protest at the Union Lunchroom in Houston. Members of the Houston Medical Forum, including Lyons Avenue physician J. S. Stone, posted the students' bonds.<sup>117</sup> By 1961, numerous downtown lunch counters had integrated as a result of the association's demonstrations.<sup>118</sup>

Desegregation unfolded gradually in Houston, with progress in health care, education, and public accommodations occurring throughout the 1960s. Educational opportunities for Black students in Houston remained severely limited during the segregation era, reflecting the broader inequalities of the Jim Crow system.<sup>119</sup> In 1951, Houston had three senior high schools for Black students. The Phillis Wheatley High School, which opened at Lyons Avenue and Gregg Street, west of the district, in 1927, became one of the largest in the United States.<sup>120</sup> The Fifth Ward and Wheatley High School produced many notable figures, including Congresswoman Barbara Jordan and Congressman Mickey Leland; musicians Arnett Cobb, Milton Larkin, and Illinois Jacquet; boxer George Foreman; and civil rights activist Dr. Lonnie Smith.<sup>121</sup> Despite the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Houston, like most Southern cities, largely ignored the ruling. The construction of the Astrodome in 1965 as an integrated public space helped accelerate local desegregation, which extended to hotels and theaters by the early 1960s. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 strengthened public school desegregation by linking federal funding to integration and prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations while expanding protections for voting rights.<sup>122</sup>

Desegregation disrupted the economic and social foundations of Black "Main Streets" throughout the United States. As residents and businesses moved into newly accessible areas, long-standing Black commercial corridors experienced sharp declines in economic activity and community cohesion.<sup>123</sup> While

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<sup>112</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, "City Golf Segregation Decision Due Shortly," October 12, 1953, A9; "Golf, Continued"; *Post*, "Negro Golfers Plat at 2 Public Courses".

<sup>113</sup> *Chronicle*, "Golf, Continued".

<sup>114</sup> Beatrix Hoffman, *The Medical Civil Rights Movement and Access to Health care*, National Library of Medicine, 2016.

<sup>115</sup> *Chronicle*, "Negro Doctors Back Sit-Ins Youth Group".

<sup>116</sup> Keller, *Make Haste Slowly: Moderates, COnservatives, and School Desegregation in Houston*.

<sup>117</sup> *Chronicle*, "Negro Doctors Back Sit-Ins Youth Group".

<sup>118</sup> Micahel Anderson, "Eldrewey Stearnes and Houston's Student Civil Rights Movement," *Houston History* 14, no. 2 (2017).

<sup>119</sup> Keller, *Make Haste Slowly: Moderates, COnservatives, and School Desegregation in Houston*.

<sup>120</sup> Kleiner, "Exploring the Rich History and Culture of Houston's Fifth Ward".

<sup>121</sup> Pando, "In the Nickle: Houston's Fifth Ward"; Richard West, "Only the Strong Survive," *Texas Monthly*, February 1979.

<sup>122</sup> Keller, *Make Haste Slowly: Moderates, COnservatives, and School Desegregation in Houston*; Scardino, *Improbable Metropolis*.

<sup>123</sup> {Pruitt, 2013 #9531}

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Black consumers began shopping at formerly segregated businesses throughout the city, white customers rarely visited Black-owned establishments, causing these businesses to lose their customer base.<sup>124</sup> Following the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and subsequent legal changes aimed to eliminate race-based housing restrictions, new suburban developments attracted middle-class Black families, leading to the economic decline of neighborhoods like the Fifth Ward.<sup>125</sup> As Fifth Ward residents dispersed across Houston, the neighborhood experienced rising abandonment, poverty, and crime.<sup>126</sup> Escalating violence twisted a mild nickname for the neighborhood into the epithetic “Bloody Nickel,” “Bloody Fifth,” or “Pearl Harbor.”<sup>127</sup> These negative monikers first appeared in white-owned newspapers in the 1940s in reports on neighborhood crime and were later adopted by some Fifth Ward residents.<sup>128</sup> In 1969, Fifth Ward Black musician Juke Boy Bonner wrote songs that issued warning to “Stay off Lyons Avenue” or it could be “the last place you’ll be seen.”<sup>129</sup> By this time, the Fifth Ward and Lyons Avenue became associated with poverty and crime as disinvestment and neglect transformed the area.<sup>130</sup>

### Lyons Avenue, 1960 to 1980s

The term “Bottom” or “Black Bottom” informally describes Black neighborhoods in or adjacent to clearly segregated urban areas.<sup>131</sup> The term originally described the land itself. In Detroit, early French settlers used the term for its rich, dark soil. In Nashville, it referred to low-lying areas prone to flooding. Although Bottoms often lacked formal boundaries, discriminatory practices such as redlining<sup>132</sup> and race-based zoning separated these communities from the rest of the city. Over time, especially during the Great Migration,<sup>133</sup> the meaning shifted. As Black families left the rural South to settle in urban areas, Bottoms were neighborhoods shaped by exclusion, resilience, and racialized urban policy, not simply their topography. In many cities, the Bottom’s “Main Street” emerged as a crucial commercial hub where Black entrepreneurs could operate and build economic stability; this pattern reflected broader dynamics in segregated urban economies, where exclusion from white-owned establishments made Black-owned business districts indispensable to local economic and social life.<sup>134</sup> The term “Bottom” gained deeper cultural weight when Nobel laureate author Toni Morrison tied it to the Black American experience in her novel *Sula*.<sup>135</sup>

Systematic underinvestment in these communities led to their stigmatization as “slums” or “blighted” areas, designations that carried lasting consequences. In 1949, Congress passed the Federal Housing Act,

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<sup>124</sup> Frazier, “The Nickel: A History of African-Descended People in Houston’s Fifth Ward”; Pando, “In the Nickle: Houston’s Fifth Ward”.

<sup>125</sup> Edward M. Emmett, *Houston’s Freeways: Who Was Displaced and Why?*, Baker Institute, 2024.

<sup>126</sup> Frazier, “The Nickel: A History of African-Descended People in Houston’s Fifth Ward”.

<sup>127</sup> *Post*, “The Face of Houston”; Pando, “In the Nickle: Houston’s Fifth Ward”; West, “Only the Strong Survive”.

<sup>128</sup> *Houston Post*, “W. H. Keagans, Peaceful Peace Officer for 45 Years, Dies Here,” October 20, 1943, 12; Gregg Reese, Heavyweight champion George Foreman dies at 76, *Our Weekly*, 2025.

<sup>129</sup> Frazier, “The Nickel: A History of African-Descended People in Houston’s Fifth Ward”.

<sup>130</sup> Frazier, “The Nickel: A History of African-Descended People in Houston’s Fifth Ward”; Pando, “In the Nickle: Houston’s Fifth Ward”.

<sup>131</sup> Ken Coleman, “The People and Places of Black Bottom, Detroit,” *Humanities* 42, no. 4 (2021); Ujiji Davis, “The Bottom’: The Emergence and Erasure of Black American Urban Landscapes,” *Avery Review* 34 (October 2018).

<sup>132</sup> Redlining was a systematic, discriminatory practice in which banks, insurers, and other institutions denied services to people based on the racial makeup of their neighborhoods rather than on individual qualifications. {Understanding Houston, 2021 #11316}

<sup>133</sup> The Great Migration—one of the largest internal movements in U.S. history—reshaped the nation as more than six million Black Americans left the rural South for cities between 1916 and 1970. {Pruitt, 2013 #9531}

<sup>134</sup> Coleman, “The People and Places of Black Bottom, Detroit”; Davis, “The Bottom”.

<sup>135</sup>

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (Vintage Books, 1973); Stancivique Ndambi and Hubert Frank Lylian Massala, “HISTORY AND FICTION: BLACK AMERICANS’ EXPERIENCE IN TONI MORRISON’S *SULA*,” *Journal of English Language and Literature* 8, no. 4 (2021).

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granting local governments funding and authority to seize and demolish private and public property for the purpose of improving aging infrastructure.<sup>136</sup> The first wave of funding began in 1950 as post-World War II federal aid to cities. Across the country, land labeled slums or blighted was acquired and cleared to make way for commercial improvements, multiple-family housing complexes, or highway development projects.<sup>137</sup> By 1965, the federal government had committed \$7.6 billion to urban renewal efforts in 827 communities in 40 states. The consequences of urban renewal included the destruction of historic buildings, the displacement of vulnerable families, and the removal and closure of small businesses.<sup>138</sup>

Although Houston ranked as the seventh largest city in the United States by 1960, it did not participate in the federally funded urban renewal program because eligibility for federal aid required cities to adopt formal zoning laws.<sup>139</sup> Without official zoning ordinances, Houston's land use has long been shaped by a mix of local ordinances, private covenants, and redevelopment plans. This approach enabled transformations of the urban landscape, clearing the way for highways, commercial corridors, and large-scale developments. In place of city-led zoning, Houston relied on deed restrictions, landscape rules, and private regulations, effectively shifting land use authority from public institutions to private entities.<sup>140</sup>

Houston's urban renewal history includes both publicly funded and privately led redevelopment efforts, each leaving distinct marks on historically Black neighborhoods. One early example is the 1939 construction of San Felipe Courts in the Fourth Ward, developed as an affordable housing project. This development displaced Black families and business owners for white-only housing, further entrenching racial segregation.<sup>141</sup>

In the Fifth Ward, a major private urban renewal initiative took shape in 1969. The Moncrief-Lenoir Manufacturing Company invested \$10 million to acquire roughly 30 acres along the western end of Lyons Avenue, aiming to clear deteriorated structures and redevelop the area for commercial use. At the time, it was projected to be one of the largest privately funded urban renewal projects in the country. After demolition, efforts to attract businesses to the area failed and the promised revitalization eluded the neighborhood.<sup>142</sup>

Mid-century freeway expansion became a defining feature of urban planning, often intersecting with patterns of racial segregation and displacement, diminishing the role of Black "Main Streets" across the country. But long before Houston's freeways were built, city planners already understood the city's racial and economic layout. The 1929 City Planning Commission for Houston called for racial segregation enforced by zoning laws in the Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth wards. This zoning proposal never passed, but housing restrictions, such as 1930s redlining policies, enforced segregation.<sup>143</sup> Redlining maps emerged in the 1930s as a federally sanctioned method of exclusion to prevent Black Americans from accessing homeownership. In 1933, during the Great Depression, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) was established to stabilize homeownership. To assess lending risk, HOLC created color-coded residential maps for 239 major cities, including those in Texas. Neighborhoods were graded from A to D,

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<sup>136</sup> Ann Pfau et al., "Urban Renewal," in *The Inclusive Historian's Handbook*, Press Books, 2023.

<sup>137</sup> Davis, "The Bottom".

<sup>138</sup> Pfau et al., "Urban Renewal".

<sup>139</sup> Charles Culhane, "How Urban Renewal is Helping Many Cities," *Houston Post*, November 21, 1965, 10.

<sup>140</sup> Zhu Qian, "Without zoning: Urban development and land use controls in Houston," *Cities, Science Direct* 27, no. 1 (2010).

<sup>141</sup> *Houston Chronicle*, "Fourth Ward: An Area Waiting for Some Action," April 25, 1971, 8.

<sup>142</sup> Mark Heckmann, "Fifth Ward Project Never Got Off The Ground," *Houston Chronicle*, October 4, 1976, 5; *Houston Chronicle*, "Ten Million Spent in Fifth Ward Project," December 11, 1969, 4.

<sup>143</sup> Emmett, Houston's Freeways: Who Was Displaced and Why?

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with D areas marked in red to signify “hazardous” investments. In practice, predominantly Black neighborhoods were routinely assigned the lowest rating, regardless of economic status or location.<sup>144</sup>

Redlining maps and segregation policies shaped Houston’s freeway planning and later construction, disproportionately harming predominantly Black neighborhoods.<sup>145</sup> 1949, Houston’s freeway plan included Interstate Highway 45, Eastex Freeway/U.S. Highway 59, Interstate Highway 10, and sections of Interstate Highway Loop 610. The plan map aligned closely with Houston’s redlined neighborhoods that HOLC had defined.<sup>146</sup> At the time, this included the predominantly Black neighborhoods of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth wards, whose proximities to downtown made them especially vulnerable to disruption.<sup>147</sup> These projects were part of a broader national push to build interstate highways, reshaping urban landscapes and mobility.<sup>148</sup>

Houston’s mid-century freeway expansion brought profound disruption to the Fifth Ward, where new highways fractured the neighborhood and isolated its commercial corridor.<sup>149</sup> The development of Houston’s freeway system began with the acquisition of the Gulf Freeway right of way in the 1940s and its subsequent opening between 1948 and 1952. In the early 1950s, planning and construction for the Eastex Freeway/U.S. Highway 59, Interstate Highway Loop 610, and Interstate Highway 10 East commenced. Construction of the North Freeway/Interstate Highway 45 began in 1959, and freeway expansion accelerated through the 1960s.<sup>150</sup> Houston’s Fifth Ward endured some of the most destructive displacement during freeway construction as the Eastex Freeway/U.S. Highway 59 split its western edge and Interstate Highway 10 divided its southern boundary. The construction of Interstate Highway 10 severed Lyons Avenue, turning it into a dead end at Harbor Street. This disrupted the flow of people and commerce, cut access to nearby residential areas, and diminished its “Main Street” role. By the early 1970s, the cumulative impact had transformed Lyons Avenue, contributing to long-term economic and social change.<sup>151</sup>

Community-led initiatives responded to decades of disinvestment and displacement in Houston’s Fifth Ward. In 1967, the City of Houston established the Human Organizational Political and Economic Development (HOPE), an antipoverty agency, headquartered in three buildings along Lyons Avenue. HOPE published the *Voice of Hope* newspaper and offered job training, legal aid, employment assistance, and family education programs.<sup>152</sup> In 1989, with more than 20 percent of parcels vacant or abandoned, the FWCRC was founded to lead neighborhood revitalization. Its efforts focused on new home construction, job training, access to technology, and the arts. During the 1990s, the FWCRC acquired land for redevelopment and partnered with the Fifth Ward Housing Corporation and Habitat for Humanity to build and renovate affordable housing. In 1991, the Fifth Ward Housing Corporation, in collaboration with The Metropolitan Organization, built four single-family homes along Lyons Avenue across from St.

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<sup>144</sup> Qian, “Without zoning: Urban development and land use controls in Houston”.

<sup>145</sup> Emmett, *Houston’s Freeways: Who Was Displaced and Why; Segregation by Design*, Houston: Freeways and Urban Renewal, Segregation by Design, 2025.

<sup>146</sup> Emmett, *Houston’s Freeways: Who Was Displaced and Why*; TexasFreeway.com, *Historic Houston Freeway Planning Maps*, Texas Freeway.com, 2025.

<sup>147</sup> Emmett, *Houston’s Freeways: Who Was Displaced and Why; Chronicle*, “Fourth Ward: An Area Waiting for Some Action”; Design, Houston: Freeways and Urban Renewal.

<sup>148</sup> Emmett, *Houston’s Freeways: Who Was Displaced and Why?*

<sup>149</sup> {Pando, 2011 #9541}; {Emmett, 2024 #11306}

<sup>150</sup> Emmett, *Houston’s Freeways: Who Was Displaced and Why*; TexasFreeway.com, *IH-10 East, the Baytown-East Freeway*, Texas Freeway.com, 2025; *Understanding Houston, Exploring the Legacy of Redlining in Houston*, Understanding Houston, 2021.

<sup>151</sup> Emmett, *Houston’s Freeways: Who Was Displaced and Why*; Pando, “In the Nickle: Houston’s Fifth Ward”.

<sup>152</sup> Pando, “In the Nickle: Houston’s Fifth Ward”.

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Elizabeth's Hospital.<sup>153</sup> Since its founding, the FWCRC and its partners have constructed more than 300 single-family homes, developed two multiple-family complexes, rehabilitated commercial properties, installed public art, and restored historic landmarks.<sup>154</sup>

### Comparable Properties

During the early twentieth century, a network of corridors in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth wards supported Houston's Black commerce.<sup>155</sup> Although Black-owned businesses emerged in later Black communities such as Independence Heights, Sunnyside, and Acres Homes, these areas never developed commercial districts on the same scale as those found in the wards.<sup>156</sup> The nearest comparable examples to Lyons Avenue are the Third Ward's Dowling Street and the Fourth Ward's San Felipe Road. Highway development fractured Dowling Street (now Emancipation Avenue), a cultural and commercial center that emerged as a Black commercial corridor from the 1910s through the early 1950s, with a mix of Black-owned businesses and music venues centered around Emancipation Park, at Dowling and Elgin streets.<sup>157</sup> Between 1910 and 1930, the Black population in the Third Ward grew and Black-owned businesses emerged along Dowling Street, which became the area's main commercial corridor.<sup>158</sup> By the 1940s, Dowling Street boasted more than 120 stores between Interstate Highway 45 and Alabama Street.<sup>159</sup> However, mid-century interstate construction and the 1981 expansion of State Highway 288 through the Third Ward physically divided its once-connected business and residential districts.<sup>160</sup>

In the Fourth Ward, San Felipe Road (now West Dallas Street), the city's earliest and most prominent "Main Street" for the Black population, declined under the pressures of urban renewal, public housing projects, and freeway construction. Also called Freedmen's Town, the Fourth Ward developed as Houston's earliest Black neighborhood after the Civil War. Churches, professional services, and small businesses along San Felipe Road became the commercial and civic center for Black Houstonians.<sup>161</sup> During the 1930s, it was home to more than 95 percent of the city's Black-owned businesses.<sup>162</sup> The Fourth Ward, hemmed to the south and west by surrounding developments, lost prominence during the 1940s.<sup>163</sup> The 1944 opening of San Felipe Courts Apartments, an all-white public housing development that replaced one-quarter of Freedmen Town's land, deterred the Black commercial and civic presence. The construction of Interstate Highway 45 separated the eastern portion of the Fourth Ward from the rest of the community.<sup>164</sup> In the 1960s, a large area of the community was cleared for office building

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<sup>153</sup> Ben DeSoto, Fifth Ward, 1982-2000, MSS 0118, ADD BOX 2, Ben DeSoto Photograph Collection, Box 2, Houston Public Library, African American Research Center at the Gregory School; Pando, "In the Nickle: Houston's Fifth Ward".

<sup>154</sup> Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corp., About Us, Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corp., 2025.

<sup>155</sup> {Pruitt, 2013 #9531} {Steptoe, 2015 #9524}

<sup>156</sup> {Pruitt, 2013 #9531}

<sup>157</sup>

Ezell Wilson, "Third Ward, Steeped in Tradition of Self-reliance and Achievement," *Houston History Magazine* 2011.

<sup>158</sup> Brandon Allen, Third Ward, Houston, Texas, 2019.

<sup>159</sup> Nancy Sarnoff, "Designs reawaken Dowling Street's forgotten past," (Houston Chronicle, May 14 2016; reprint, repr.).

<sup>160</sup> Emmett, Houston's Freeways: Who Was Displaced and Why; Design, Houston: Freeways and Urban Renewal.

<sup>161</sup> Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*.

<sup>162</sup> Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie : Afro-Texan history and culture in Houston*.

<sup>163</sup> Cary D. Wintz, "The Fourth Ward: A Historic African-American Community in Houston," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, Texas State Historical Association, 2020.

<sup>164</sup> Design, Houston: Freeways and Urban Renewal.



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construction.<sup>165</sup> Between the 1940s and the 1970s, the Fourth Ward lost more than half its population as homes were demolished and businesses closed.<sup>166</sup>

Amid these mid-twentieth-century disturbances, the Fifth Ward's Lyons Avenue became Houston's leading Black "Main Street" with its concentration of businesses, churches, and social institutions.<sup>167</sup> Lyons Avenue experienced the effects of urban renewal and freeway construction later than the Third and Fourth wards, yet it remained a central commercial and cultural corridor for Black Houstonians until highway building and the disinvestment that followed began to erode its role in the late 1960s.<sup>168</sup>

## Conclusion

The Lyons Avenue Historic District is eligible under Criterion A at the local level of significance, in the areas of Social History and Ethnic Heritage/Black, for its representation of a commercial and cultural corridor in the Fifth Ward. During the early twentieth century, Lyons Avenue emerged as one of Houston's few Black "Main Streets", becoming a center for commerce, cultural life, and collective resilience. Anchored with locally owned businesses, churches, civic institutions, and health care facilities, Lyons Avenue offered essential services that fostered the Black community during an era of segregation and systemic inequality. By the mid-twentieth century, Lyons Avenue was Houston's most prominent Black Main Street. The period of significance extends from about 1925, the construction date of the earliest-built extant resources in the district, to 1975, the recommended 50-year cutoff guideline. This period of significance incorporates post-war changes that disrupted long-standing development patterns on Lyons Avenue—in particular, freeway construction in the 1960s and later urban renewal projects.

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<sup>165</sup> Wintz, "The Fourth Ward: A Historic African-American Community in Houston".

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Tomiko Meeks, "Freedmen's Town, Texas: A Lesson in the Failure of Historic Preservation," *Houston History Magazine* 2011.

<sup>167</sup> Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie : Afro-Texan history and culture in Houston*; Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration*; Design, Houston: Freeways and Urban Renewal.

<sup>168</sup> Beeth and Wintz, *Black Dixie : Afro-Texan history and culture in Houston*; Frazier, "The Nickel: A History of African-Descended People in Houston's Fifth Ward"; Pando, "In the Nickle: Houston's Fifth Ward".

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## Section 10: Geographical Data

### Latitude/Longitude Bounding Coordinates

1.	Latitude:	29.776584	Longitude:	-95.323958
2.	Latitude:	29.774882	Longitude:	-95.323933
3.	Latitude:	29.774876	Longitude:	-95.324722
4.	Latitude:	29.775548	Longitude:	-95.324727
5.	Latitude:	29.775549	Longitude:	-95.324871
6.	Latitude:	29.774490	Longitude:	-95.324861
7.	Latitude:	29.774491	Longitude:	-95.325049
8.	Latitude:	29.774620	Longitude:	-95.325050
9.	Latitude:	29.774602	Longitude:	-95.325305
10.	Latitude:	29.775831	Longitude:	-95.325319
11.	Latitude:	29.775827	Longitude:	-95.325481
12.	Latitude:	29.776016	Longitude:	-95.325483
13.	Latitude:	29.776015	Longitude:	-95.325647
14.	Latitude:	29.775823	Longitude:	-95.325645
15.	Latitude:	29.775800	Longitude:	-95.326116
16.	Latitude:	29.775731	Longitude:	-95.326115
17.	Latitude:	29.775719	Longitude:	-95.326586
18.	Latitude:	29.775581	Longitude:	-95.326585
19.	Latitude:	29.775523	Longitude:	-95.328053
20.	Latitude:	29.775661	Longitude:	-95.328055
21.	Latitude:	29.775670	Longitude:	-95.328653
22.	Latitude:	29.775420	Longitude:	-95.328650
23.	Latitude:	29.775412	Longitude:	-95.328977
24.	Latitude:	29.775686	Longitude:	-95.328980
25.	Latitude:	29.775648	Longitude:	-95.329956
26.	Latitude:	29.775939	Longitude:	-95.329959
27.	Latitude:	29.775950	Longitude:	-95.329456
28.	Latitude:	29.776334	Longitude:	-95.329475
29.	Latitude:	29.776353	Longitude:	-95.329318
30.	Latitude:	29.776391	Longitude:	-95.329318

### Verbal Boundary Description:

The Lyons Avenue Historic District (Figure 3) is roughly bounded by parcels fronting Lyons Avenue beginning east of the intersection with Benson Street, extending east along Lyons Avenue to end at its intersection with Yates Street. One building at the southwest corner of Benson Street and Lyons Avenue is included in the boundary. The district encompasses parts of 5 blocks and the entirety of 57 parcels.

### Boundary Justification:

The boundary encompasses a portion of Lyons Avenue with a concentration of extant resources associated with its development as a "Main Street" in the predominantly Black Fifth Ward community during the Jim Crow and civil rights eras. Although the Fifth Ward community and historical Lyons Avenue corridor extend beyond this boundary, substantial loss of historic fabric and nonhistoric-age infill

Lyons Avenue Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas

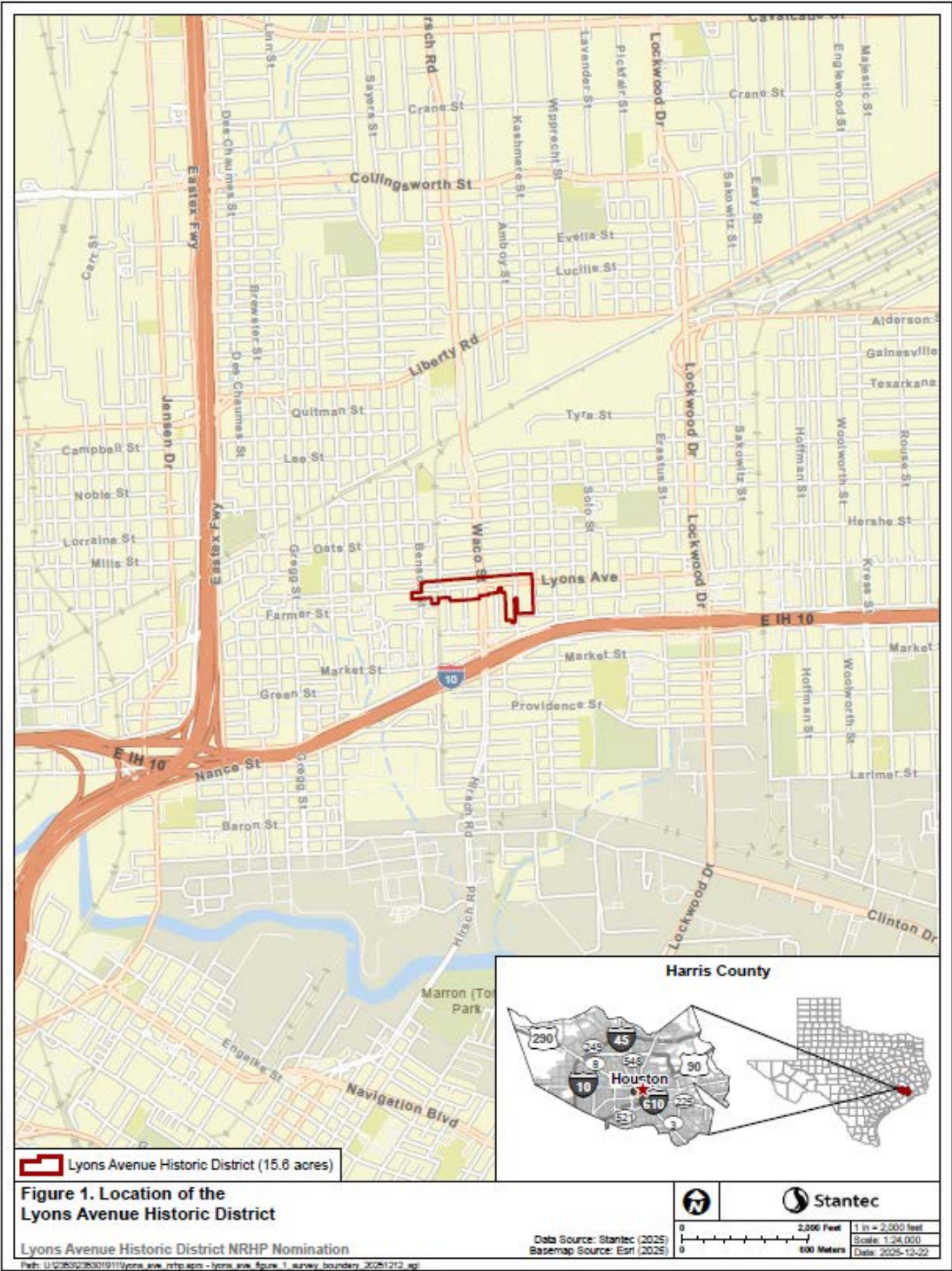
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along Lyons Avenue to the east and west of the district boundary to preclude NRHP listing. Buildings in the boundary retain sufficient historical and physical integrity to convey their significant associations with social history and ethnic heritage.

Lyons Avenue Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Maps

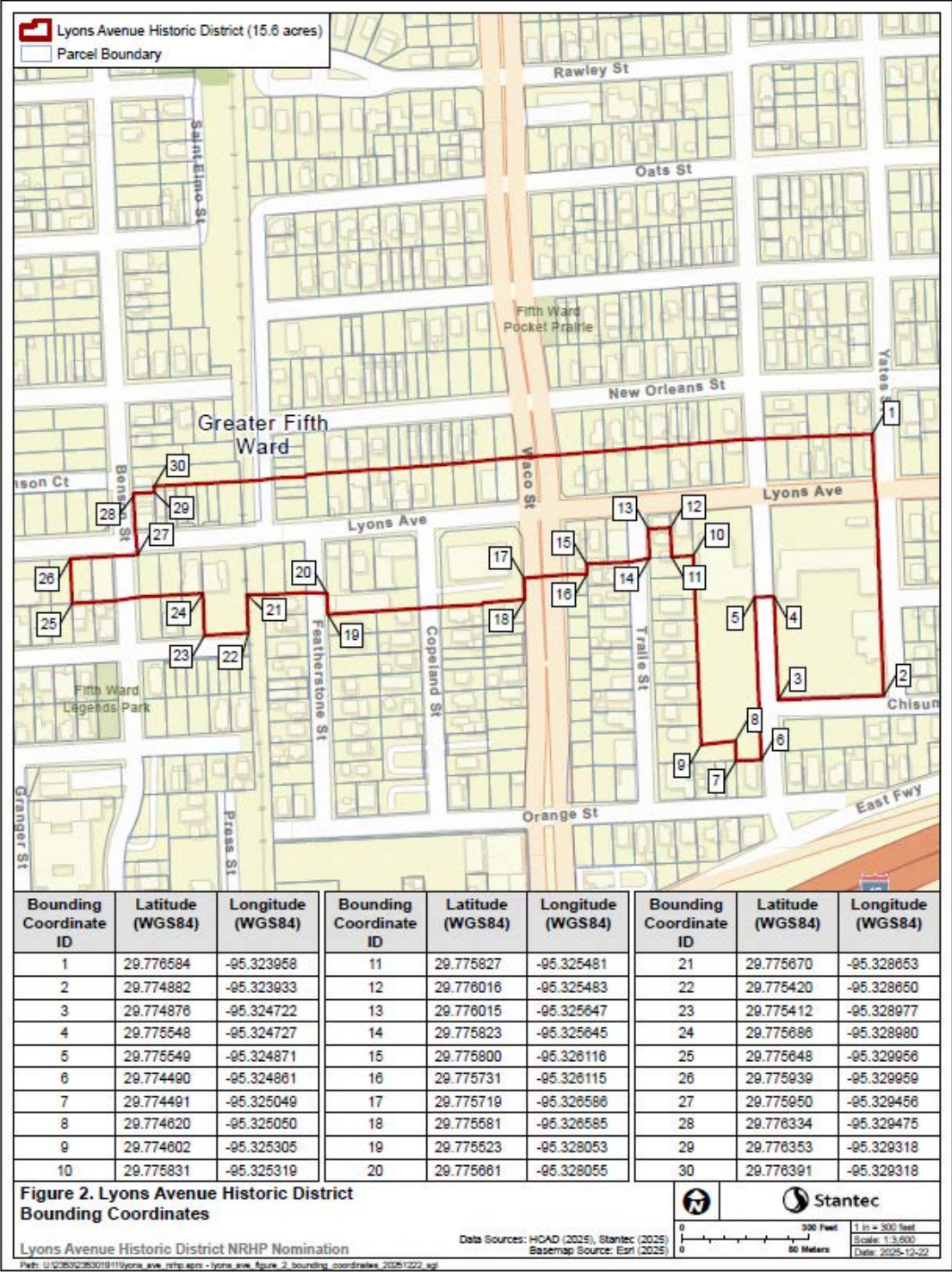
Figure 1. Location of the Lyons Avenue Historic District, Stantec 2026





Lyons Avenue Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas

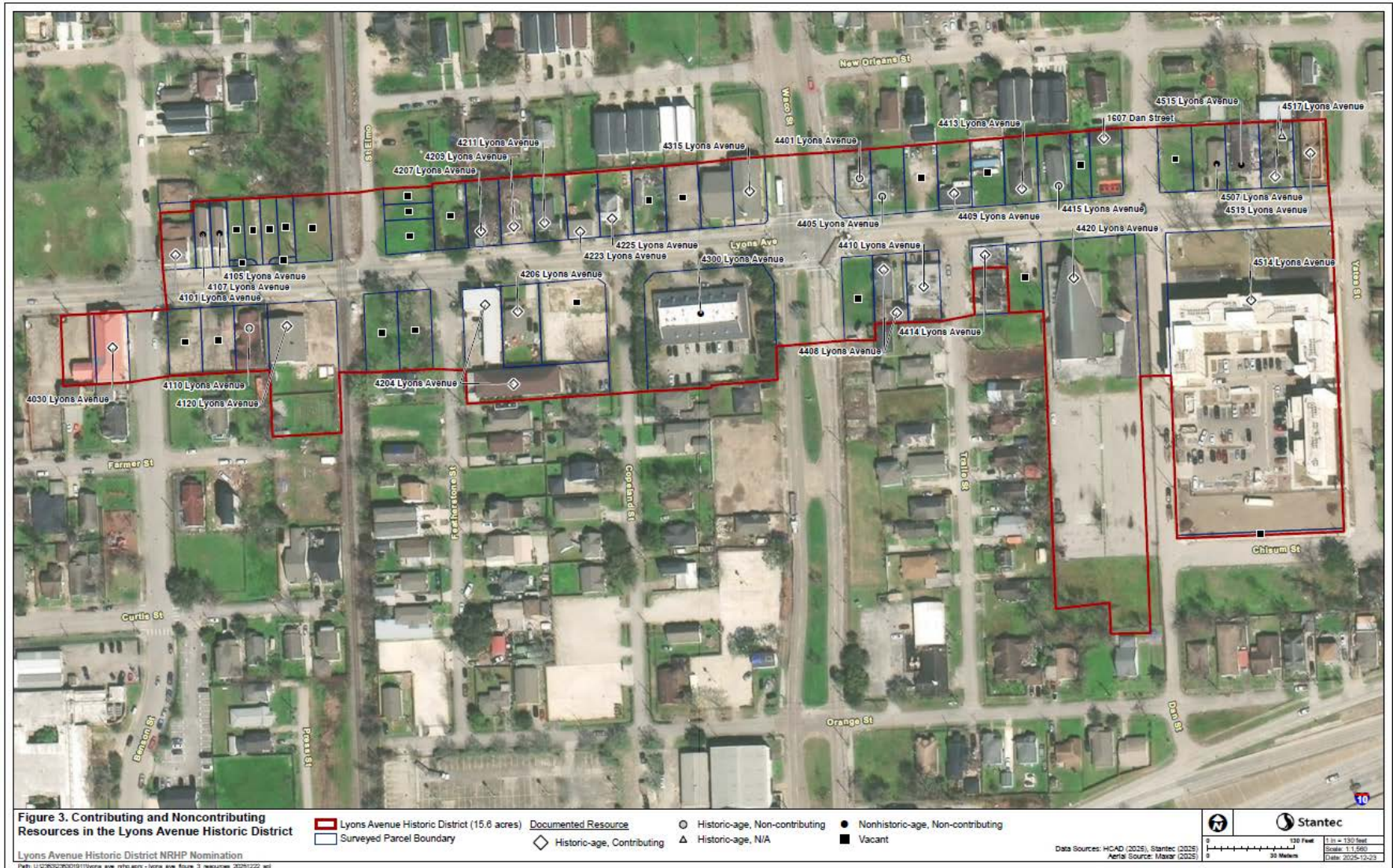
Figure 2. Lyons Avenue Historic District Bounding Coordinates, Stantec 2026





Lyons Avenue Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 3. Contributing and Noncontributing Resources in the Lyons Avenue Historic District, Stantec 2026





Lyons Avenue Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 4. Lyons Avenue Historic District in the Fifth Ward, Stantec 2026

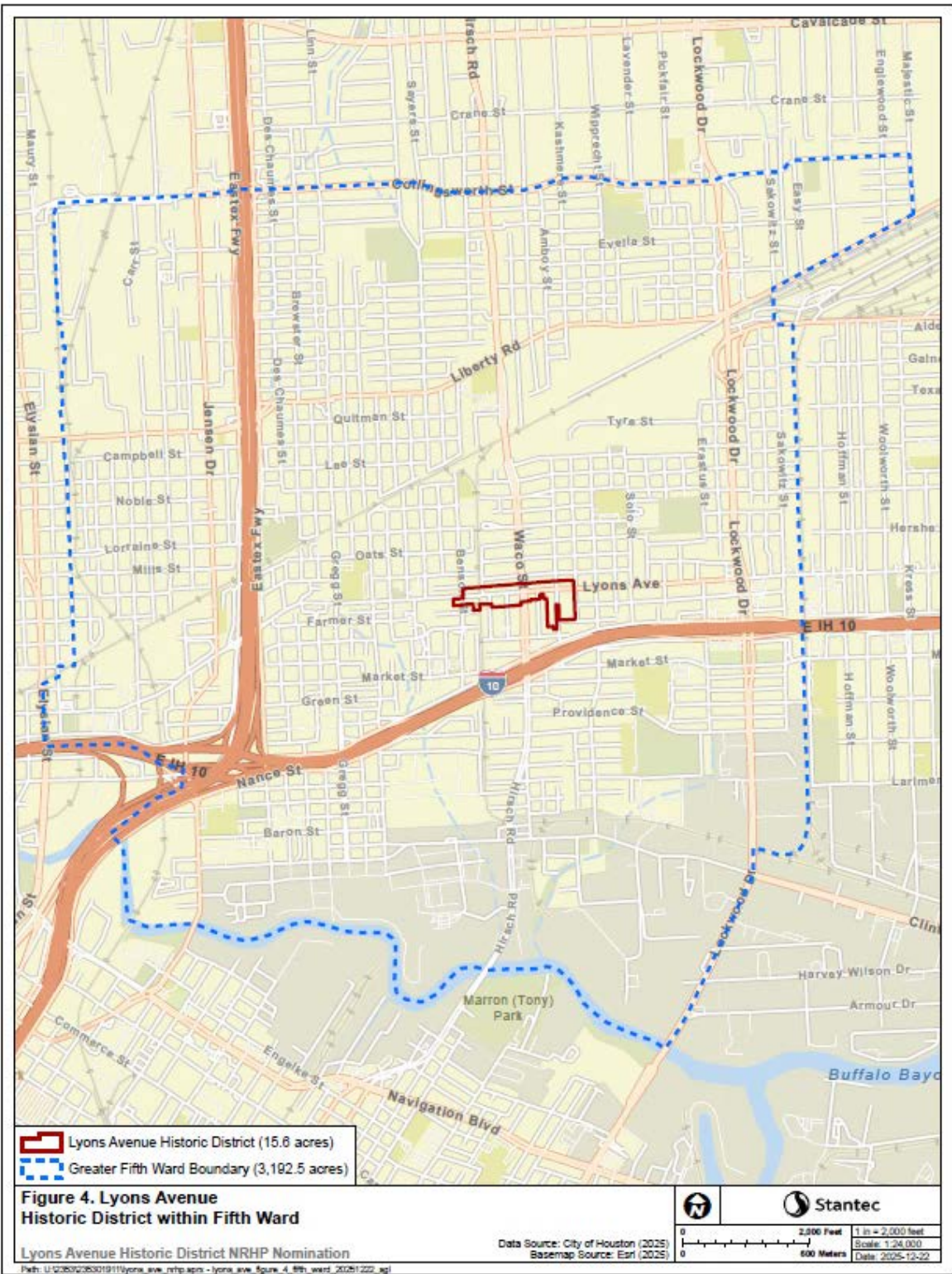


Figure 5. Lyons Avenue Historic District on 1913 City of Houston Map

Lyons Avenue Historic District (15.6 acres)

Stantec

0 400 Feet  
0 100 Meters

1 in = 400 feet  
Scale: 1:4,800  
Date: 2025-12-22

Basemap Source: Houston Title Guaranty Co. (1913), available through the Harris County Archives

Lyons Avenue Historic District NRHP Nomination

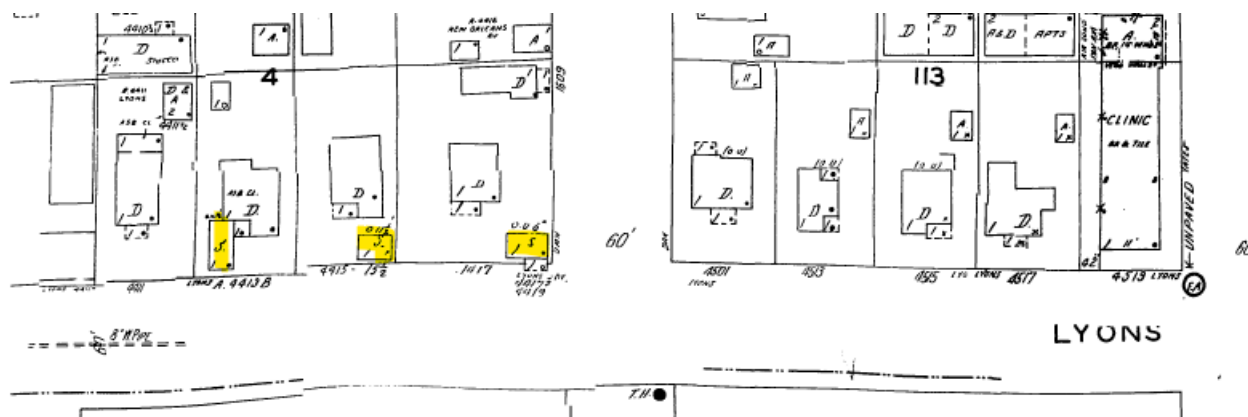
Page 48



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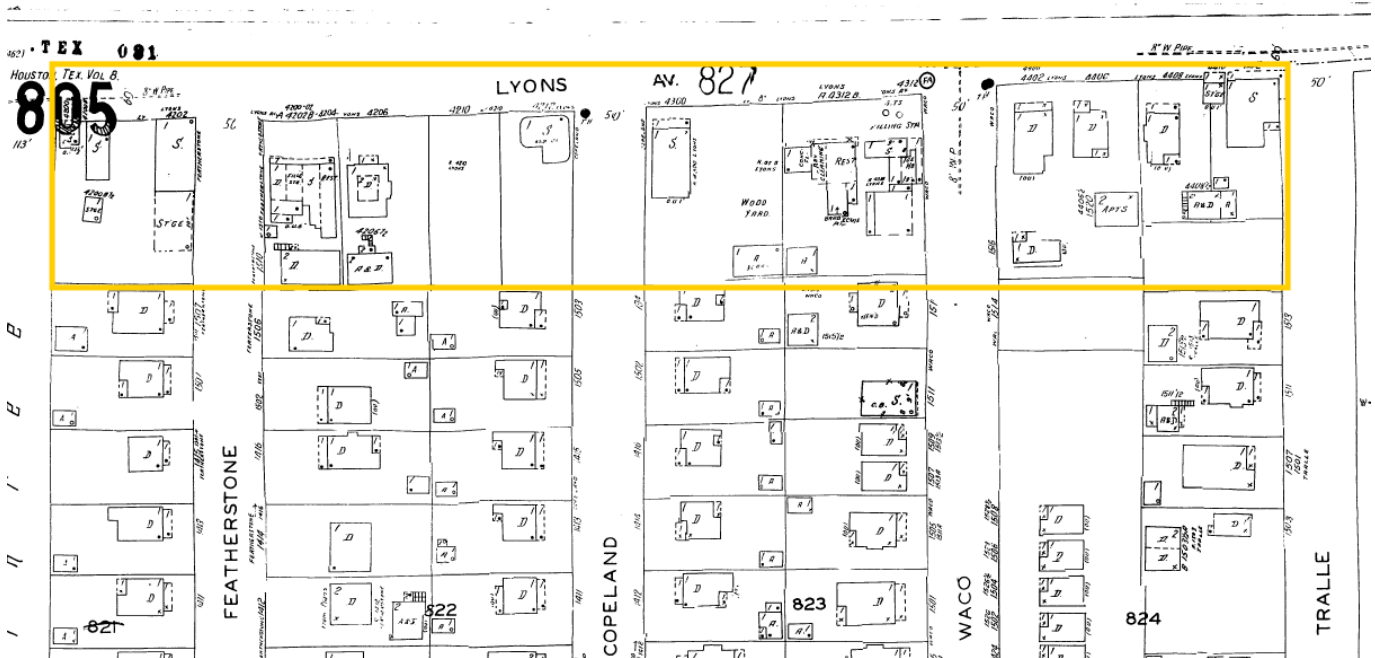
## Additional Documentation

Figure 6. The yellow highlights superimposed on this 1921–1951 Sanborn map (Vol. 8, Sheet 828) illustrate commercial development on Lyons Avenue parcels that were primarily residential. Excerpted and annotated by Stantec.



Lyons Avenue Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Figure 7. Within the yellow box superimposed on the 1921–1951 Sanborn map (Vol. 8, Sheet 805) shows mid-century commercial development on the south side of Lyons Avenue between the UPRR, not depicted and to the west, and Tralle Street, to the east. Excerpted and annotated by Stantec.



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## Photographs

Photograph 1. The Latter Day Deliverance Revival Church, constructed ca. 1940 as the Lyons Theater, at 4030 Lyons Avenue. View facing south.



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Photograph 2. Streetview at Lyons Avenue and Benson Street. View facing west.





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Photograph 3. The 1955 Louis White Grocery Store at 4101 Lyons Avenue. View facing north.



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Photograph 4. Streetview of nonhistoric-age resources along Lyons Avenue near Benson Street. View facing north.





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Photograph 5. The ca. 1965 Louis Robey Professional Building at 4120 Lyons Avenue. View facing south.



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Photograph 6. Official Texas Historical Marker for Peacock Records at 4120 Lyons Avenue. View facing north.





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Photograph 7. Streetview of the Lyons Avenue/Saint Elmo Street intersection with the UPRR. View facing north.



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Photograph 8. The 1962 Della Apartments, now the Sunrise Motel, at 4204 Lyons Avenue. View facing southeast.





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Photograph 9. The ca. 1925 dwelling at 4211 Lyons Avenue. View facing northwest.



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Photograph 10. The ca. 1963 health care facility of Dr. J. S. Stone at 4233 Lyons Avenue. View facing north.





Lyons Avenue Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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Photograph 11. Streetview of Lyons Avenue at the intersection of Copeland Street. View facing northwest.



Lyons Avenue Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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Photograph 12. The 1952 Miles Chapel CME Church at 4215 Lyons Avenue. View facing north.





Lyons Avenue Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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Photograph 13. The nonhistoric-age Fifth Ward Redevelopment Council building at the corner of Lyons Avenue and Copeland Street. View facing southeast.



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Photograph 14. Streetview at Lyons Avenue/Waco Street intersection. View facing east.





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Photograph 15. The ca. 1925 dwelling at 4408 Lyons Avenue. View facing south.



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Photograph 16. The 1955 Coghlan Grocery Store, now the Lyons Grocery Store, at 4410 Lyons Avenue. View facing southeast.





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Photograph 17. The 1938 commercial building at 4414 Lyons Avenue. View facing south.



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Photograph 18. The 1954 First Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church at 4420 Lyons Avenue. View facing south.





Lyons Avenue Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas

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Photograph 19. The 1947 NRHP-listed St. Elizabeth's Hospital at 4514 Lyons Avenue. View facing southwest.



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Photograph 20. The 1946 Beal Brothers Medical and Surgical Center, now vacant, at 4519 Lyons Avenue. View facing northwest.





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Photograph 21. Streetview at Lyons Avenue/Yates Street intersection. View facing southwest.





Lyons Avenue Historic District, Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photograph 22. Cane River Community Garden at 4205 Lyons Avenue. This art installation depicts a timeline of industrial contamination in the Fifth Ward. View facing northeast.

