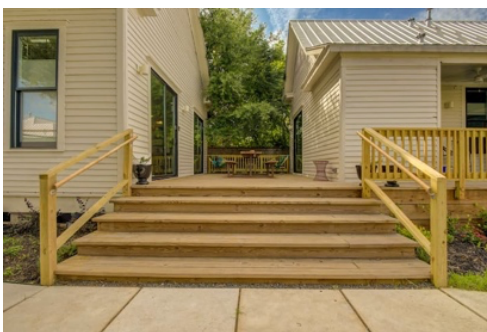


THE PLANT HOUSE | An East End guest oasis and co-living community | @planthouselove



For more information or to schedule a viewing, please contact info@planthouse.org



Website



Airbnb

The Plant House, less than 10 minutes by light rail from downtown Houston, is a creative, art-themed co-living oasis in an artsy, up-and-coming neighborhood of the East End's Second Ward, a few steps from all the fun, including wine bars and cafés, a variety of shops, and some of Houston's top restaurants.

The grounds of the property are a 6,250-square-foot garden with two lovingly restored 1890s Victorian houses that have a total of seven bedrooms and six bathrooms. The project was born of the imaginations of two longtime friends: Jeff Kaplan, co-creator of the Axelrad Beer Garden, and Robin Goldstein, co-creator of the Fearless Critic Houston Restaurant Guide.

The six white 1890s bungalows on the block were saved from destruction by neighbors and community organizers who live in the firehouse next door. They hired legendary Houston mover John Cherry to pick up the old homes and move them all onto one block. The result is an experimental neighborhood divided not by fences but by friendly hedges and open green lawns—a place that feels more like 1890s Houston than today's city. Residents of the block include chefs, artists, urban developers, and entrepreneurs.

Jeff and Robin spent most of their life savings on restoring the two houses that make up the Plant House. The work took almost five years. Since opening in 2019, the Plant House has been running mostly as an Airbnb. It is a Superhost property and was featured in the August 2019 issue of *Houstonia*, which called it “Houston's coolest Airbnb.”

The first thing you may notice after walking through the gates and into the garden is the colorful civilization of hammocks in the shade of a big old oak tree. The Axelrad influence shows through from the trademark free-rotating hanging air seats, wonders of comfort that can swivel around to be social or private.

The interiors of the two houses were decorated by some of Houston's most talented young artists and furniture workers. Every item of furniture in the Plant House was either built or restored in the East End of Houston. The stairway and cabinetry in the Plant House was built by HTX Made, a few blocks away.

The houses' seven bedrooms range considerably in size. Five rooms have private en-suite bathrooms, and two other rooms share a sixth bathroom. There are two washer-dryers for guest use, one in each house. Guests also share a big open living area with TV and sound system, and one kitchen and dining area for each house.

Expansive outdoor facilities include 3 por wooden-floored deck and patio space, lawn, hammocks, gas grill, picnic tables, and pizza oven. There are three large porch and deck areas and several good individual workspaces and areas for private meetings. The big communal deck that connects the two houses is the heart of the experience—a perfect place for sunny lunches, solo laptop sessions, or making new friends.

Rooms have hotel-style amenities and locally made non-toxic organic mattresses made in the neighborhood and designed to for cool, calming sleep. Furniture in the rooms, from side tables to arm chairs to mirrors, are unique, one-of-a-kind art items. Nothing on the property comes from Ikea. The space is a tribute to local craftspeople, artists, and entrepreneurs.

Right across Preston Street, about a 30-second walk from the houses, are Angie's Pizza (some of the best pizza in Houston), Eden (a coffee shop that also sells houseplants), a grocery store (Little Red Box), two clothing stores, a barber shop, and a hemp store. Champ Burger, also a few steps away, has been serving some of the city's best burgers for 50 years. And Eight Row Flint, a few more steps down Harrisburg, is a bar and grill with a buzzy atmosphere and scenic roof garden with views over downtown Houston. They're open late serving brilliant food and craft cocktails, and have great happy hour specials.

Many other great restaurants, bars, and cafés are within walking distance, including Voodoo Queen, White Rhino, El Charro, Roostar, El Tiempo Cantina, Gatsby's Grill, Ninfa's on Navigation, Doña María, and Mérida. Eight Row Flint will also soon open on Harrisburg, two blocks away.

The Plant House attracts a fun, creative, lively crowd of people who enjoy each other's company and like meeting new people. You'll make interesting new friends here, and you maybe even end up involved in someone else's project.

Many spaces are shared, the houses are old, and the walls are thin. If you're a light sleeper, you might not be happy here. It is important to Jeff and Robin to find long-term guests who are easy to get along with, clean and respectful with common spaces, tolerant of occasional imperfection, and committed to following house rules.

All co-living rooms are currently rented through early to mid-August 2023, but there is some availability in August, and other guests who may be moving out in September and October. We maintain an active waitlist. To get on the list, please email robin.s.goldstein@gmail.com.

THE PLANT HOUSE | Overview of rooms and monthly costs

Front House		Private space (approx. sq. ft.)				Cost per month		
Room	Windows	Bedrm	Bath	Other	Total	Room	Shared ¹	Total
Cherry	3 (SE, SW, skylight)	125	35		160	\$1,000	\$350	\$1,350
Yellow Rose	3 (SW, NW, NE)	130	40		170	\$1,100	\$350	\$1,450
Robin's Nest	5 (2 SW, SE, NW, sky)	175	45		220	\$1,350	\$350	\$1,700

Big House		Private space (approx. sq. ft.)				Cost per month		
Room	Windows	Bedrm	Bath	Other	Total	Room	Shared ¹	Total
Fiesta	2 (SE bed, NW bath ²)	120	70 ²		190	\$750	\$350	\$1,100
Tilly	2 (SE bed, NW bath ²)	125	70 ²		195	\$750	\$350	\$1,100
Moon Loft	4 (NE, SE, 2 sky ³)	235	60	65 ³	360	\$1,300	\$350	\$1,650
Porch	5 (2 SE, 2 NE, NW)	195	95	140 ⁴	430	\$1,950	\$350	\$2,300

Shared areas for guest use	Shared space (approx. sq. ft.)
Front House front porch	125
Front House kitchen and laundry	190
Front House side deck	160
Main deck between houses	325
Big House kitchen, living, laundry	800
Garden and grounds	2,000+

Notes:

¹ Total shared monthly costs for the house are approximately \$2,450, including common area cleaning, maintenance, and gardening of the houses and grounds (\$1,900), utilities (\$300), repairs (\$150), and supplies (\$100). These costs are split equally between the 7 rooms (\$350 each). Shared monthly costs will be adjusted periodically based on actual costs.

² Tilly and Fiesta rooms share a single 70-square-foot bathroom, included in windows and total square footage.

³ Moon Loft includes a 65-square-foot reading nook outside the private door, included in windows and total square footage.

⁴ Porch Room includes a 140-square-foot covered back porch with private entrance, included in total square footage.

Current availability

Front House

Cherry: leased until Oct 1, 2023; may be available if not renewed

Yellow Rose: available starting Aug 11, 2023

Robin's Nest: leased until Nov 1, 2023; may be available if not renewed

Big House

Moon Loft: leased until Nov 12, 2023; may be available if not renewed

Fiesta: leased until Sept 20, 2023; may be available if not renewed

Tilly: leased until Aug 14, 2023; may be available if not renewed

Porch: available starting Aug 1, 2023

FIESTA ROOM | A colorful homage to Texas' Mexican market heritage



The Fiesta Room, in the Big House, is creatively decorated with a tactile art installation by beloved local muralist Melissa Eason. The installation honors Texas' beloved Fiesta supermarkets and Houston's Mexican-American culture, and includes a spice rack, a hand-painted Fiesta parrot, and other artistic surprises tucked throughout the room.

Fiesta is a sweet, cozy bedroom with high 11-foot ceilings and one wall lined with century-old shiplap that artfully preserves original layers of harmonious coffee and cream paint colors. One big, tall southeast-facing window has two-way blackout blinds and white trim dramatically set off against the unpainted vintage boards. You'll sleep comfortably in a hardwood queen bed and non-toxic organic mattress made by local artisans in Houston's Second Ward.

The room is also furnished with a dramatic oversized mirror, three side tables, and a recessed open closet with a clothing-hanger rod and shelf. There is a folding and swiveling reading light on one side of bed and power bases on both sides of the bed, each with three power outlets and two USB ports. The 70-square-foot full bathroom with spacious rain shower, across the hall, is shared with the Tilly Room next door.

In keeping with its name, the Fiesta Room is not for light sleepers: it's very close to the Big House living room and kitchen. Because of the limited storage space in the room, it is not suitable for anyone who comes lots of clothing or personal belongings, and it cannot accommodate a full-time resident couple.

FIESTA ROOM | Availability and pricing

Availability

Full-time starting April 16, 2023. The month of March will be pro-rated.

Base cost for room

Rent, per month	\$750
Shared cleaning, maintenance, and gardening, per month	\$275
Shared utilities, per month	\$40
Shared repairs and maintenance, per month	\$20
Shared kitchen and garden supplies, per month	\$15
Total base cost	\$1,100

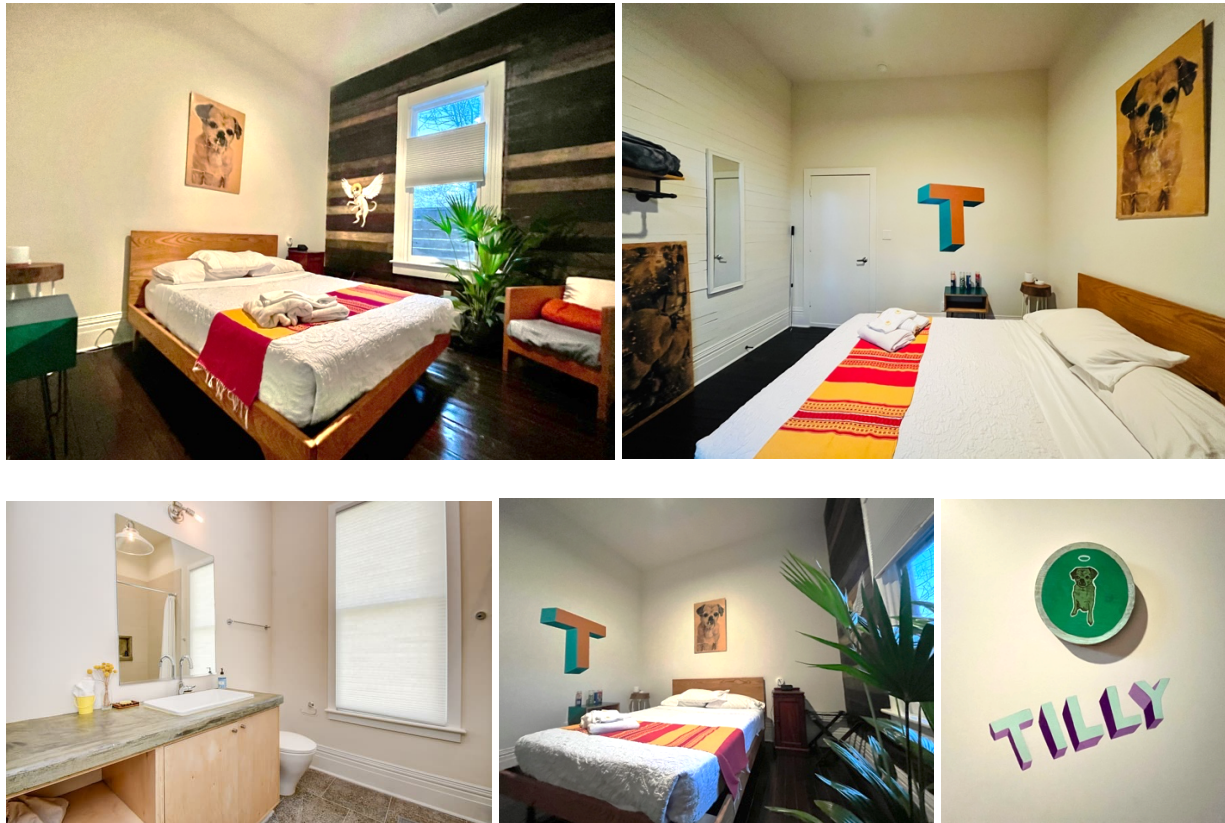
Serviced room options

Private room cleaning, with change of sheets	
A la carte, per cleaning	\$25
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$90
Per month, twice per week (33% discount)	\$140
Personal laundry, wash and fold	
A la carte, per load	\$25
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$90
Per month, twice per week (33% discount)	\$140

1-month initial term, renewable on mutual agreement for 6 to 12 months at a time.

See "Optional services for all rooms" below for additional services available.

TILLY ROOM | A shiplap-lined art experience straight out of dog heaven



The Tilly Room, in the Big House, is home to a visual art installation by beloved local muralist Melissa Eason in honor of a dearly departed pug named Tilly. The multi-media work includes two wall paintings and two stylized plywood transfers.

The room is cozy and sweet, with high 11-foot ceilings and one wall completely lined with century-old shiplap that artfully preserves original layers of paint in harmonious color ranges of warm coffee and cream. One big, tall southeast-facing window has two-way blackout blinds and white trim that's dramatically set off against the unpainted vintage boards. You'll sleep comfortably in a hardwood queen bed and non-toxic organic mattress made by local artisans in Houston's Second Ward.

The room is also furnished with an hardwood armchair built by local artisans, a mirror, two side tables, and a clothing-hanger rod with shelf. There's an atmospheric multi-color lamp with on, a soothing white-noise and atmospheric sound machine, and power bases on both sides of the bed, each with three power outlets and two USB ports. The 70-square-foot full bathroom with spacious rain shower, a few feet across the hall, is shared with the Fiesta Room next door.

The Tilly Room can get a bit noisy, as it's near the Big House living room. Because of the limited storage space in the room, it's not suitable for anyone who comes lots of clothing or personal belongings, and it cannot accommodate a full-time resident couple.

TILLY ROOM | Availability and pricing

Availability

Full-time starting March 6, 2023. The month of March will be pro-rated.

Base cost for room

Rent, per month	\$750
Shared cleaning, maintenance, and gardening, per month	\$275
Shared utilities, per month	\$40
Shared repairs and maintenance, per month	\$20
Shared kitchen and garden supplies, per month	\$15
Total base cost	\$1,100

Serviced room options

Private room cleaning, with change of sheets	
A la carte, per cleaning	\$25
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$90
Per month, twice per week (33% discount)	\$140
Personal laundry, wash and fold	
A la carte, per load	\$25
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$90
Per month, twice per week (33% discount)	\$140

1-month initial term, renewable on mutual agreement for 6 to 12 months at a time.

See "Optional services for all rooms" below for additional services available.

CHERRY ROOM | A small, private nook with TV and en-suite bath

Photos not currently available.

The Cherry Room is a wood-lined private room with an en-suite private bathroom. It's located on the Preston Street end of the property, and it is the smallest of the three rooms in the quieter and more private Front House. Unlike the other two rooms in the Front House, the Cherry Room has a door that connects directly to the Front House kitchen and dining area without having to go through the hallway and outdoor patio.

The bedroom has a high 12-foot ceiling and two of four walls completely lined with century-old shiplap that artfully preserves original layers of paint in harmonious color ranges of warm coffee and cream. The compact but lovely bathroom has a shower column that soars through the house and former attic all the way to the roof. You'll shower with a tropical rain showerhead under a stream of full-spectrum rays from an open skylight 16 feet above you.

In the bedroom, one big, tall southeast-facing window has two-way blackout blinds and white trim that's dramatically set off against the unpainted vintage boards. You'll sleep comfortably in a hardwood queen bed and non-toxic organic mattress made by local artisans in Houston's Second Ward.

The Cherry Room has two possible configurations. The first is as currently furnished, with a twin-sized daybed that doubles as a sofa. Alternatively, the daybed could be replaced with a full-sized double bed for a more traditional bedroom configuration.

The room has a 40-inch TCL Roku HDTV mounted on a swinging wall bracket. You can log in to your Netflix, Prime, HBO, etc. accounts and watch from the comfort of your bed or sofa by adjusting the TV position. The room also has a basic shelving unit and a hanger rod, but there's not a lot of total storage space. Because of its size and storage capacity, the Cherry Room is not suitable for a resident couple.

CHERRY ROOM | Availability and pricing

Availability

Full-time starting April 1, 2023.

Base cost for room

Rent, per month	\$1,000
Shared cleaning, maintenance, and gardening, per month	\$275
Shared utilities, per month	\$40
Shared repairs and maintenance, per month	\$20
Shared kitchen and garden supplies, per month	\$15
Total base cost	\$1,350

Serviced room options

Private room and bathroom cleaning, with change of sheets	
A la carte, per cleaning	\$35
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$125
Per month, twice per week (36% discount)	\$190
Personal laundry, wash and fold	
A la carte, per load	\$25
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$90
Per month, twice per week (33% discount)	\$140

1-month initial term, renewable on mutual agreement for 6 to 12 months at a time.

See "Optional services for all rooms" below for additional services available.

YELLOW ROSE | A cheerful oasis of sunlight, design, and century-old wood



The Yellow Rose is an artfully designed private room with high ceilings, tons of natural sunlight, and an en-suite private bathroom. It's located on the Preston Street end of the property, in the quieter and more private Front House.

The Yellow Rose is a room where past meets present. It's dedicated to the Yellow Rose of Texas, the seductive grande dame of Texas yore who defeated General Santa Anna and his army at San Jacinto. Some furnishings in the room were rescued from the lavish suites at La Colombe d'Or, one of Houston's grand old-world hotels. A vintage desk gives you a private workspace with a regal touch that's ideal for video calls.

The room's lovingly restored walls are layered in colors of dark coffee and original turquoise, preserved on the wide shiplap boards that are more than a century old. White trim is set off against the unpainted boards to create a dramatic visual effect.

The high ceiling, which rises 12 feet, is painted in a cheery shade of yellow. Tall windows let in tons of light from three sides, and give pleasant views of a landscaped garden and a pretty church across the street. Two-way blackout blinds let light flood into your room while preserving complete privacy from the outside.

Modern mirrors, Edison bulbs, and a long, narrow polished cement sink give the room's interior design an avant-garde touch. The sink is outside the bathroom, on the bedroom side of the wall. Your bathroom is small but airy, and the tropical rain shower has a column that's 12 feet tall. Because it has limited storage space, the room is not ideal for a resident couple.

YELLOW ROSE | Availability and pricing

Availability

Full-time starting March 21, 2023. The month of March will be pro-rated.

Base cost for room

Rent, per month	\$1,100
Shared cleaning, maintenance, and gardening, per month	\$275
Shared utilities, per month	\$40
Shared repairs and maintenance, per month	\$20
Shared kitchen and garden supplies, per month	\$15
Total base cost	\$1,450

Serviced room options

Private room and bathroom cleaning, with change of sheets	
A la carte, per cleaning	\$35
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$125
Per month, twice per week (36% discount)	\$190
Personal laundry, wash and fold	
A la carte, per load	\$25
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$90
Per month, twice per week (33% discount)	\$140

1-month initial term, renewable on mutual agreement for 6 to 12 months at a time.

See "Optional services for all rooms" below for additional services available.

MOON LOFT | Upstairs, a private retreat under the stars



The Moon Loft is a private upstairs room with starry artwork, a skylight with moon views, and an expansive, sun-bathed en-suite private bathroom with tree-lined views. You get to your room by walking up a safe, wide staircase in the Big House.

Here you will sleep peacefully under a mural of the night sky by artist Laura Douglas that depicts all of the zodiac constellations, on a locally made, nontoxic, queen-sized Bungalow mattress and a hardwood bed that was handcrafted by local artisans in Houston's Second Ward.

The Moon Loft occupies a nook in a converted attic. It's one of our most private rooms, a floor above other guests, with a private staircase to the room. Your room has a private HD Roku TV where you can log in to your Netflix, Prime, HBO, etc. accounts and watch from the comfort of your bed. But it won't be ideal if you're tall, because its ceilings are low and sloping.

The bathroom is full height and has a long, beautiful picture window with views of trees from the luxuriously large shower. The Moon Loft is lightly decorated with mid-century modern furniture and a Houston/moon landing theme. You would be welcome to spiff up the décor yourself, including painting on the walls: we'll even cover the materials.

Outside the Moon Loft is a private nook with a reading lounge, a super-comfy leather recliner, and a big Love Sac.

The room is large enough to accommodate a couple. There's an extra monthly charge, as shown on the price list, for a second resident in the room.

MOON LOFT | Availability and pricing

Availability

Full-time starting March 6, 2023. The month of March will be pro-rated.

Base cost for room

Base rent, per month	\$1,300
Shared cleaning, maintenance, and gardening, per month	\$275
Shared utilities, per month	\$40
Shared repairs and maintenance, per month	\$20
Shared kitchen and garden supplies, per month	\$15
Total base cost per month	\$1,650

Additional cost per month for a resident couple \$150

Serviced room options

Private room and bathroom cleaning, with change of sheets	
A la carte, per cleaning	\$35
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$125
Per month, twice per week (36% discount)	\$190
Personal laundry, wash and fold	
A la carte, per load	\$25
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$90
Per month, twice per week (33% discount)	\$140

1-month initial term, renewable on mutual agreement for 6 to 12 months at a time.

See "Optional services for all rooms" below for additional services available.

ROBIN'S NEST | A spacious, light-flooded cradle of original shiplap and turquoise



Robin's Nest is a big, sun-bathed, wood-lined private room with an en-suite private bathroom. It's located on the Preston Street end of the property, and it is the largest of the three rooms in the quieter and more private Front House.

The room is lovingly dressed in shades of robin's-eggshell turquoise, with original layers of paint preserved on much of the century-old shiplap and the high ceiling, which rises 12 feet. White trim is set off against the unpainted boards to create a dramatic visual effect.

From sunrise to sunset, the room sings with three-sided light from four big, tall windows, three of them south-facing. Two-way blackout blinds let light flood into your room while preserving complete privacy from the outside. Views from the two big Preston-side windows are of the Front House's tranquil front porch, landscaped front yard, and a pretty church across the street.

The compact but lovely bathroom is another highlight of the room, with a tropical rain shower in a column that soars through the house and former attic right up to the roof. You'll shower under a stream of full-spectrum rays from a skylight that sits 16 feet above you.

Robin's Nest is furnished with a full-sized turquoise art-nouveau sofa, two sets of shelves with plenty of storage space (not pictured), and a hanger rod. The room is large enough to accommodate a couple. There's an extra monthly charge, as shown on the price list, for a second resident in the room.

ROBIN’S NEST | Availability and pricing

Availability

Full-time starting March 21, 2023. The month of March will be pro-rated.

Base cost for room

Rent, per month	\$1,350
Shared cleaning, maintenance, and gardening, per month	\$275
Shared utilities, per month	\$40
Shared repairs and maintenance, per month	\$20
Shared kitchen and garden supplies, per month	\$15
Total base cost per month	\$1,700

Additional cost per month for a resident couple \$150

Serviced room options

Private room and bathroom cleaning, with change of sheets	
A la carte, per cleaning	\$35
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$125
Per month, twice per week (36% discount)	\$190
Personal laundry, wash and fold	
A la carte, per load	\$25
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$90
Per month, twice per week (33% discount)	\$140

1-month initial term, renewable on mutual agreement for 6 to 12 months at a time.

See “Optional services for all rooms” below for additional services available.

PORCH ROOM | Our sunny, expansive master suite with private entrance and personal porch



The swanky Porch Room, located in the back end of the Big House, is the largest guest accommodation in the Plant House. It has a private entrance on a long, wide back porch with a table and seating for six. The room has a hardwood queen bed and non-toxic organic mattress made by local artisans in Houston's Second Ward, and an enormous private en-suite bath/dressing room with a locally built large-capacity six-drawer hardwood bureau.

The Porch Room's walls are lined from floor to high 11-foot ceiling with century-old shiplap that artfully preserves original layers of paint in harmonious color ranges of warm coffee and cream. White trim is set off against the unpainted boards to create a dramatic visual effect. The room is illuminated from three sides with light from five big, tall windows, two southeast-facing.

Your bathroom is the biggest and most luxurious in the Plant House. Light pours in from windows on two sides. An spacious and airy two-person shower has a black tiled floor, a tropical rain showerhead on one end, and a hand-held showerhead and bench on the other.

Two-way blackout blinds on all five windows let light flood into your room while preserving complete privacy, both in the bedroom and bathroom. Views from your private porch and porch-side window give onto a gracious grassy lawn behind the Big House, a young tree, a small chicken coop. A small row of plants sets your private porch apart from the back lawn. Across the lawn is the home of Jeff, the co-owner.

The Porch Room is furnished with a small private microwave oven and private wine fridge that can also be used to store food; a one-of-a-kind cream-colored armchair by local artist Cristina Murusiak; a five-foot-long double shelf of dark ancient wood; and a strikingly designed vintage storage unit with a rod for hanging clothes and additional shelving above it. The room is large enough to accommodate a couple, at an extra monthly charge that is shown on the price list.

PORCH ROOM | Availability and pricing

Availability

Negotiable. Short stays possible at a price per week equivalent to one-third the monthly price.

Base cost for room

Rent, per month	\$1,950
Shared cleaning, maintenance, and gardening, per month	\$275
Shared utilities, per month	\$40
Shared repairs and maintenance, per month	\$20
Shared kitchen and garden supplies, per month	\$15
Total base cost per month	\$2,300

Additional cost per month for a resident couple \$150

Serviced room options

Private room and bathroom cleaning, with change of sheets	
A la carte, per cleaning	\$35
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$125
Per month, twice per week (36% discount)	\$190
Personal laundry, wash and fold	
A la carte, per load	\$25
Per month, once per week (15% discount)	\$90
Per month, twice per week (33% discount)	\$140

See "Optional services for all rooms" below for additional services available.

OTHER INCLUDED AND OPTIONAL SERVICES FOR GUESTS

Coffee

Daily morning coffee at Eden Plant Co. for the first 3 mos. Included (free)

Car rental

Tesla car, 1 hour per week (unused hours roll over) Included (free)

Tesla car, additional hours, per hour Approx. \$14

Pizza oven

Includes firewood, pizza ingredients, setup, and cooking help if needed

Pizza party for 3–4 \$150

Pizza party for 6–8 \$225

Pizza party for 10–12 \$300

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

HOUSTONCHRONICLE.COM • SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2023 • VOL. 122, NO. 234 • \$4.00

TEA's sway over local districts grows

Agency has seen shift in control of schools over last decade under GOP-led Legislature

By Edward McKinley
AUSTIN BUREAU

Thursday's state takeover of the Houston Independent School District was a watershed moment in Texas education policy.

The state has never attempted a takeover this big — the district is the largest in the state and the eighth largest in the country, serving nearly 200,000 students — and it comes amid a heated political debate on private school

vouchers and on the teaching of race and LGBTQ issues.

But in many ways, the move is indicative of the Texas Education Agency's increasing involvement in day-to-day school operations, a shift that has been accelerating for 10 years, much of it under the guidance of Gov. Greg Abbott and the GOP-led state Legislature.

INSIDE

Here's what's next for HISD after state takeover. **A20**

The agency has been led since 2015 by Commissioner Mike Morath, an Abbott appointee. The former software developer and Dallas ISD board member has pushed for big, technocratic re-

forms — an approach that has irked some conservatives and been criticized by Democrats as missing more pressing problems.

"Morath is kingdom-building when the need is teachers in schools," said Rep. Gina Hinojosa, an Austin Democrat who previously served on the Austin ISD. **TEA continues on A9**

Communal living offers reprieve to renters



Elizabeth Conley/Staff photographer

The Plant House is an artsy co-living community in a pair of bungalows converted into flexible rentals near the East End.

In one of Montrose's newest residential projects opening next year, renters will be able to walk into fully furnished spaces stocked with basic supplies, paying rents below market rate in one of Houston's trendiest neighborhoods.

Rent will include professional cleaning and utilities, and they'll have access to happy hours and group outings. The only catch: They

Communities across the city boast lower rents, social amenities

By Marissa Luck | STAFF WRITER

could be living with strangers.

That's because the 238-unit development, UNITY Montrose, will offer co-living, a style of communal living growing in Houston involving professionally managed roommate housing. Think of it as a version of college dorms for working adults.

The nine-story UNITY Montrose at 701 Richmond will be operated by **Co-living continues on A11**

Default averted as Biden signs debt bill

Limit is suspended until after 2024 race

By Chris Megerian
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — With just two days to spare, President Joe Biden signed legislation on Saturday that lifts the nation's debt ceiling, averting an unprecedented default on the federal government's debt.

The White House announced the signing, done in private at the White House, in an emailed statement in which Biden thanked congressional leaders for their partnership.

The Treasury Department had warned that the country would start running short of cash to pay all of its bills on Monday, which would have sent shockwaves through the U.S. and global economies.

Republicans refused to raise the country's borrowing limit unless Democrats agreed to cut spending, leading to a standoff that was not resolved until weeks of intense negotiations between the White House and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.

The final agreement, passed by the House on Wednesday and the Senate on Thursday, suspends the debt limit until 2025 — after the next presidential election — and restricts government spending. It gives lawmakers **Limit continues on A10**

BUSINESS // REAL ESTATE

Communal living is on the rise in Houston as coliving residents embrace flexible, cheaper leases



Marissa Luck, Staff writer

June 3, 2023 | Updated: June 3, 2023 3:16 p.m.



6/5/23, 12:55 PM

Houston coliving trend expands with Montrose, Museum District rentals



The Plant House resident Jennie Johnson, from left, grabs a plate as she enjoys pizza with future resident Brittany Stanley and co-owner Jeff Kaplan in the backyard on Friday, June 2, 2023 in Houston.
Elizabeth Conley/Staff photographer

6/5/23, 12:55 PM

Houston coliving trend expands with Montrose, Museum District rentals



1 of 8



Plant House resident Jennie Johnson, from left, enjoys pizza with future resident Brittany Stanley, co-owner Jeff Kaplan and potential resident A.J. Adams in the communal yard on Friday, June 2, 2023 in Houston.
Elizabeth Conley/Staff photographer

In a coliving community, residents can often find cheaper rent, more flexible lease terms and more social interaction while avoiding the pitfalls of typical shared housing, like finding roommates and bickering over bills.

Coliving emerged several years ago as an affordable alternative for renters in New York and Los Angeles. But in recent years, as more people moved to the Sun Belt, coliving providers followed, offering a solution to rising rents and inflation. There are at least 70,000 professionally managed coliving units planned in the U.S., real estate firm Cushman & Wakefield estimates.

“The industry started with converting brownstones in New York to coliving situations, but now we find many of our clients have seen the value in building coliving from ground up,” said Karlene Holloman, CEO of Common, which has raised \$110 million in venture capital and expects to have at least 8,000 coliving beds by the end of 2023. “It’s a growing industry.”

6/5/23, 12:55 PM

Houston coliving trend expands with Montrose, Museum District rentals



Jennie Johnson poses for a portrait Tuesday, May 30, 2023, at the Plant House, a co-living space, in Houston.
Jon Shapley/Staff photographer

Fast friends, cheaply

At UNITI, renters can choose from 167 micro-units or studios, but in units with a total of 207 coliving beds, residents can save 15 to 20 percent on rent compared with a studio in the area, said Mark Simon, principal at the Shelter Cos., an arm of Civitas Capital. (Average studio rents across Houston are about \$1,039 but jump to \$1,370 in the Montrose/River Oaks area, according to real estate data firm CoStar.) Coliving residents each get their own bathroom but share other common spaces.

Short-term leases are common in coliving buildings, and that flexibility can be appealing for professionals who are new to town or for contract workers. That was the case for Jennie Johnson, a 39-year-old political organizer, who moved to Houston for a work assignment in February. Johnson said it was hard to find an apartment near downtown for under \$2,000 a month without a one-year lease. Then she heard about [The Plant House](#), an artsy coliving community in a pair of 1800s-era bungalows that entrepreneurs Jeff Kaplan and Robin Goldstein converted into flexible rentals near the East End.

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At The Plant House, Johnson pays about \$1,675 a month for a furnished loft with a bathroom, including utilities, internet and cleaning services. She lives with two to three roommates, and there are frequent group gatherings, pizza parties and mini concerts.

“It’s been really nice to be social again after kind of being isolated for the greater part of three years,” Johnson said.

Article from July 2019 issue of *Houstonia* magazine:



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SPACE CITY

These Historic Bungalows in the East End Might Be Houston's Coolest Airbnbs

Every design detail—from the eco-friendly mattresses, to the mismatched furniture, to the pendant lights, to the prints of Texas oilfields and native plants—is part of a Houston story.

By [Laura Furr Mericas](#) • July 22, 2019 • Published in the [August 2019](#) issue of *Houstonia Magazine*

Feature image: *Jack Thompson*

Houston's East End, 2014. Six circa-1890s bungalows slowly made their way from Garrow Street, traveling eight blocks before arriving at their new address at the corner of Sampson and Preston. Onlookers gathered to watch the strange parade, some with beers in hand, as the rundown houses, bolstered by giant metal beams, slid off their Cherry Companies trucks and onto cinder blocks in Michael Skelly and Anne Whitlock's backyard.

This would be the first of many block parties of sorts centered around the couple's home, a 100-year-old fire station that Skelly, a renewable-energy pioneer, and Whitlock, founding director of neighborhood nonprofit Connect Communities, purchased in 2013. They'd spent two years restoring it while carving out six additional lots from its massive, near-block-spanning property.

Each lot got its own bungalow, with the couple restoring three themselves and selling the rest. A pair of longtime friends—Robin Goldstein, a travel writer, and Jeff Kaplan, the man behind myriad local endeavors including [Axelrad Beer Garden](#) and New Living furniture—decided to go in together, purchasing two plots facing Preston Street. “The deal was, *You get a free home,*” Kaplan remembers.



Jeff Kaplan on the bungalows' shared patio
IMAGE: JACK THOMPSON

The relocated bungalows—whose previous owner had let the couple haul them off to make way for townhomes—were free with the purchase of the lots. Buyers just had to pay to move their own bungalows and agree to a few stipulations: No tall fences. Metal roof. Restore the house.

“Skelly warned me,” Kaplan says. “He said, *This was going to be really hard.*”

He was right. Though structurally solid—with 12-foot ceilings, towering transom doorways, chocolatey hardwoods, and distressed-shiplap walls peeking through a century’s worth of wear and tear—the bungalows were not livable. “I can’t think of adjectives that are ugly enough to describe the interior,” Goldstein says. “Every inch of every floor and every inch of every wall had to be heavily worked on.”

It would all take a lot of time. The financing and appraisal process for renovations was complicated. Harvey hit, delaying things even more. After some back and forth, the two friends decided it would be best to turn their bungalows into Airbnbs. The plan was to rent out each of the homes’ seven total bedrooms. Eventually.



The stairway to the Moon Loft.

IMAGE: JACK THOMPSON

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Since the structures were roughly 130 years old, they required more than cosmetics. They needed air-conditioning, insulation, modern plumbing and electricity, new windows—the works. “The window guy came and just didn’t understand this. He said, *Don’t you know how much easier it would be to start over?*” Kaplan remembers. “But that wasn’t the point.”

Both avid travelers, Kaplan and Goldstein knew what Airbnb guests want in their rentals: a unique factor, definitely, but also comfort. The duo added six sleek, skinny, subway-tiled bathrooms, adorning them with skylights that pour natural light into the spaces, just as the bungalows’ traditional six-foot windows do elsewhere.



A TAXA Outdoors trailer (also on Airbnb, also Houston-made) in back, and the hammock garden.

IMAGE: JACK THOMPSON

Rather than adding chef's kitchens, they opted for modest appointments, selecting concrete countertops, naturally finished cabinets, and open shelves. The idea was to leave room for guests to meet and mingle, whether in the shared kitchens, patio space, or hammock garden in the wide-open yard. "We want people who are staying here to feel like they are living in a neighborhood that's built around a park-like environment," Kaplan says.



Michael Skelly and one of the bungalows he and wife Anne Whitlock restored

IMAGE: JACK THOMPSON

Guests, they hoped, would meet people and feel as if they're part of the neighborhood. "I had this concrete image of the perfect environment to stay in when I traveled," says Goldstein. "Jeff and I first connected over a lot of those ideas. Our utopias matched up."

Each bedroom has its own Texas-centric theme such as Fiesta, Yellow Rose, or Cherry, the last of which comes complete with artwork depicting Keith Cherry of Cherry Companies—the people to call when you want to move a home—in his iconic hat. And every design detail—from the eco-friendly mattresses, to the mismatched furniture, to the pendant lights, to the prints of Texas oilfields and native plants—is local, sourced directly from makers or area markets. "We're proud to say that nothing in the homes is from IKEA," says Kaplan. "Everything here is part of a Houston story."



Clockwise from top left: One of their two minimalist kitchens; the design elements are locally made or found; one of six bathrooms across Kaplan and Robin Goldstein's two bungalows; the Yellow Rose room with artwork by Melissa Eason and a mattress from Kaplan's own Bungalowoom; the Fiesta room.

IMAGE: JACK THOMPSON

Renovations on Kaplan and Goldstein's bungalows wrapped this summer, five years after they made their pilgrimage through the streets of the East End. The seven rooms were listed in July with help from Marco Sanchez, who serves as their official Airbnb host, and they've already welcomed a few traveling musicians on their way to Axelrad, who've put on impromptu concerts on the patio.

Work on the block's other bungalows is complete, too, and Kaplan now lives in one that Skelly and Whitlock restored, allowing him to interact with his Airbnb guests, who he hopes will take part in impromptu fajita nights, join him for a bite at El Charro down the road, and, one day, have their morning coffee at the warehouse he's converting across the street, which he's dubbed The Plant.

"Our work creates value beyond being a real estate project. Part of that necessitates going slowly," Kaplan says. "We hope people feel that it's more connected to the community, that we didn't just pop it in."