

A photograph of Mr. Walker, a man in a striped shirt, standing on the porch of his new home. The background shows a green house with a wooden porch and potted plants.

# 2020 Year End Summary

Mr. Walker greets Acres Homes neighbors from the porch of his new home.



## Greetings

As the year draws to a close, we are grateful for our expanded network of community development organizations and partners, our reinforced role in the communities we serve, and the new opportunities we have to provide Houston with an organization that is focused on realizing neighborhood development goals. Despite the challenges of working through a pandemic, the Houston Land Bank (HLB) has been “full speed ahead” through 2020, after completing a successful wrap-up of the 2018–2019 transition from the prior organizational structure of LARA.



Since March, all Board of Directors meetings have been on video conference; links are available on the posted agenda, and meetings are recorded. Meetings are on the second Thursday of each month at noon.

*Please join us!*

Meeting agendas and minutes



**Through two primary programs, HLB has helped 118 families buy new quality affordable homes since our reorganization in 2018!** We are on track to see this number increase significantly in 2021. Pandemic-driven economic distress felt by so many, while Houston’s real estate market continues to accelerate make our commitment to affordable housing and safe, equitable neighborhoods more important than ever. Given the long history of the disinvested neighborhoods we work in, and our role in supporting Mayor Sylvester Turner’s [Complete Communities Initiative](#) in our diverse neighborhoods, it was even more meaningful that this year’s brutal racially motivated killings in other cities finally catalyzed increased public action against racism—here and around the world. We stand ready to do our part to ensure that this powerful public sentiment prompts solutions to address longstanding inequities in this city.

During this most unique year, the HLB staff did work primarily remotely as a part of the City of Houston/Harris County recommendations. All operations continued at a normal pace, but increased safety measures were put in place for homebuying processes involving engagement with the public, and care was taken to make sure all lot maintenance vendors knew how to social distance and interface with the public. Despite the disruption, the team has been stronger than ever with daily calls and increased collaboration and efficiencies.



## MISSION

Strategically acquire, dispose, and steward vacant, abandoned, and damaged property into productive use to catalyze transformative community and economic development for the City of Houston



### City of Houston Mayoral Appointees

Matt Zeis, *Board Chair*  
David Collins, *Vice Chair*  
Laurie Vignaud, *Treasurer*  
Christa Stoneham, *Ex Officio*  
Jesus DeAnda  
Victor Mondragón

### City of Houston Council Appointees

Pastor Steve Hall  
John David Vasquez

### HISD Appointees

Mario Castillo, *Board Secretary*  
Carol Galloway  
Courtney Johnson Rose

### Harris County Appointees

Antoinette "Toni" M. Jackson  
Curtis Lampley

### Advisory Board Members

Nick Foran  
Vincent Marquez  
Elijah Williams  
Kellen Zale

## GOVERNANCE

HLB is governed by a volunteer board of directors appointed by the City of Houston, Harris County and the Houston Independent School District. All appointees are confirmed by their appointing entity's governing body to serve two-year terms.

In May and July, the organization was joined by new board members through the City's appointment process, including the first-ever advisory board members, rounding out an extraordinary set of expertise and experience to lend to the organization.

Mayor appoints ex-officio director to HLB board



6707 Ezzard Charles

As our long-time Board Chair Nicholas Hall saw his term come to a close this year, we celebrate his achievements which included the transition from LARA to the Houston Land Bank, a long-time vision of his come to fruition. We thank him for his service and dedication to the organization!

New mayoral appointments to join Houston Land Bank board



## VALUES

*These values guide HLB's work*



Be a good neighbor.



Collaborate with partners on key initiatives to support equitable and transformative development.



Identify highest and best use for sites that support community needs and initiatives, utilizing resources to create added value, and stem displacement of long time residents.



Provide proactive and transparent access to data, activities, and operations.



Demonstrate continuous improvement and stay agile to capitalize on opportunity.



7902 Willow St.



7716 Sealey St.



## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE



Complete communities meeting, Sunnyside

### Culture Characteristics of the Houston Land Bank Team:

- Collaboration
- Compassion
- Dedication
- Professionalism
- Creativity



Staff photo 2020

Rear: Ron Butler, Marye Barba. Front: Sam Dike (HLB Alum), Jen Allison, Anne Haynes, Darice Harris, and Ivan Zapata.

During 2020, HLB emphasized building stronger relationships with external neighborhood and industry partners as well as increasing the breadth of builders that participate in its Traditional Home Building Initiative. HLB staff participated in the Complete Communities initiative public meetings in the second cohort of neighborhoods and expanded networks to include colleagues from city and county government, area non-profits, and private sector partners.

The organization has continued to see progress in improving operations while finalizing all employee systems and documents, developing streamlined procurement procedures, and updating/refining the comprehensive [Board Policies](#). While providing regular updates on successes and achievements via social media, an updated website and media outreach, HLB also issued its first newsletter in [July](#).

Although the team continues to work remotely for the most part, HLB established a new 'home office' on the fourth floor of the BakerRipley building at 4450 Harrisburg Blvd. Once things are back to normal, the organization looks forward to collaborating with BakerRipley and other area community development ecosystem partners in the new space.

As HLB's staff grew to a team of seven, four employees were promoted to vice president this year, including:

#### **Jen Allison**

*VP Operations and Program Director*

#### **Gonzalo Gonzalez**

*VP Finance and Accounting*

#### **Darice Harris**

*VP Legal Counsel, Compliance and Program Director*

#### **Ivan Zapata**

*VP Real Estate and Development*

The HLB team is focused on becoming a key resource within our communities, a reliable and supportive voice for our homeowners as they invest in their futures, and an indispensable partner to the City of Houston. We work hard to achieve these goals and have fun along the way. Our company culture is the single most important contributor to making HLB a unique and special place to work. We have cultivated a creative, hardworking team of professionals that invoke collaboration, compassion, and dedication. Every day offers rewarding opportunities to engage with a vast array of community members, from elected leaders to our local urban garden harvester.

**Get in touch!**

[info@houstonlandbank.org](mailto:info@houstonlandbank.org)  
**281.655.4600**

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### Accomplishments to Date



**740+**

Properties Sold



**\$76+ M**

Property Value back  
into the market



**520**

Properties in Inventory,  
229 holding for HCDD



**\$1+ M**

To Taxing Entities  
in 2015



**94+**

Properties in  
development



**65+**

Acres Homes  
Neighbors Welcomed  
at Yard Social



**118**

Homes sold  
since 2019



Current inventory, December 1, 2020

### Inventory Status

The organization has some 520 properties in its inventory; scattered across nine Houston neighborhoods, the properties are of various sizes and are primarily single family lots. **More than 200 of these lots are candidates for sale to builders via HLB's Home Building Initiative, but 229 are remaining held for City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department programming** in accordance with our primary grants through the City of Houston. Most of the inventory was received from 2004-2017 by the predecessor organization, LARA, through tax foreclosure: LARA purchased some lots at tax auctions, and received others that were "struck off" because they did not sell at auction. The majority of lots are clustered in the neighborhoods of Acres Homes, Settegast, Trinity Gardens, Kashmere Gardens, Fifth Ward, and Sunnyside. Additional properties have been purchased or are under contract in Second Ward, Near Northside, and Magnolia, as described below.

Map of neighborhoods with #s lots per neighborhood.





Address of 7709 Avenue E before and after photos

## Lot Maintenance

New procedures adopted in early 2020 utilize four vendors (two new, two longstanding) and routine four-week cycles for mowing and debris removal to achieve better maintenance and appearance of HLB lots. Working to ensure that HLB is a good neighbor in the communities it serves, staff ensure the maintenance of more than 70 acres of property in accordance with City code; along with mowing and routine debris removal, efforts have included removal of abandoned vehicles and boats and proper securing of property to prevent unauthorized uses. We pride ourselves with our responsiveness to citizen concerns, and address concerns on our lots as quickly as possible.

## LOTS MAINTAINED

# 2.65 Million SF

439 properties maintained on monthly basis

# 1,394.14 Cubic Yards

of debris removed

# 281,318 Pounds

Approximate Weight of Debris Removed

# 493 Tires

removed

# 11 Abandoned Vehicles

removed



2020 marked the launch of a new program for lot maintenance and a one-time significant effort to clean up lot debris to be a better neighbor. Ongoing amounts will be tracked. Let us know of any way we can help be a better neighbor: [info@houstonlandbank.org](mailto:info@houstonlandbank.org)



## Home Building Initiative

This program is HLB's traditional vehicle for encouraging development of affordable homes; our lot sales to pre-qualified builders require construction of single-family homes for income-qualified buyers earning no more than 120 percent of area median income as defined by Census data. After processing mostly older board-approved sales contracts in 2019, the program restarted in earnest in 2020 with new guidelines and an expanded pool of builders. New systems to ensure accountability and long-term compliance help the organization demonstrate continuous improvement through the 2020 calendar year:

- HLB provided 21 homes to income-qualified homebuyers at a price of \$212,000 or below, having provided 59 homes in 2019; 76 more homes are in development, and expected to be on the market in 2021.

**76 HOMES**  
are in development

- Houston Land Bank sold 39 parcels in two rounds, generating about \$400,000 in revenue from the sale of approximately 250,000 square feet. These parcels will soon see construction of new homes; we are have just committed to selling 30 lots which will close early in the new year.

## LOTS SOLD IN 2019-20 BY NEIGHBORHOOD

|                 |    |  |
|-----------------|----|--|
| 5th Ward        | 4  |  |
| Acres Homes     | 13 |  |
| Denver Harbor   | 2  |  |
| Settegast       | 1  |  |
| Sunnyside       | 17 |  |
| Trinity Gardens | 2  |  |

- We pre-qualified another six builders this year to join a pool of 32 builders including start-up and established builders while increasing the number of women and minority-owned businesses. Pre-qualified builders are eligible to purchase lots from us, and we do the pre-qualification process annually
- We are actively looking to acquire more land for affordable housing and other community amenities, including banking clusters of lots as larger parcels in neighborhoods where we already work while establishing a presence in new areas highlighted in the City's Complete Communities initiative.

Partner with us to secure land for community purposes, please see our webpage regarding selling or donating a lot.



- The Houston Land Bank (HLB) marked another milestone in mid-April with the completion and sale of the first affordable home built under HLB supervision. To read more, [click here](#). To view the video, [click here](#).



The HLB team celebrates the construction of a new house in Sunnyside with Council Member Evans-Shabazz and new homeowner, Mr Warren K Fikes.





Habitat for Humanities launched Community Garden on 7984 Tate in Settegast



NHDP Home



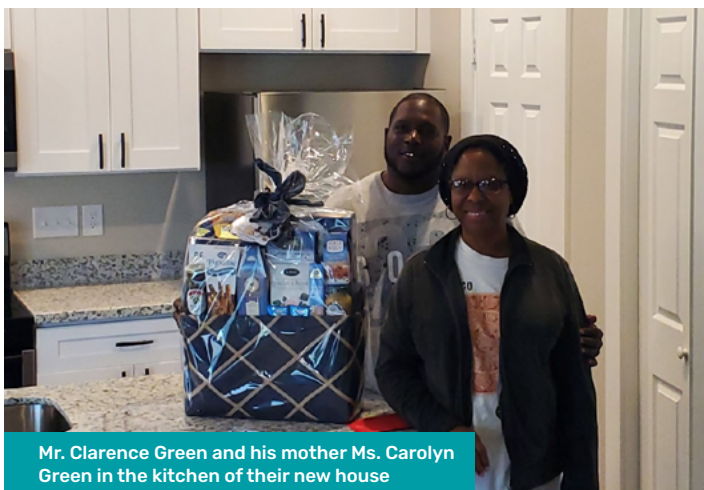
## Urban Garden Program

In 2020 Houston Land Bank revived its Urban Garden Program. Urban Harvest operates on two parcels as community gardens in Sunnyside, W.A.I.I.T operates one in the Fifth Ward and is currently in development, and another one in Settegast is also operated as a community garden, sponsored by Houston Habitat.

## New Home Development Program

HLB also supports equitable and transformative development in partnership with the City's [New Home Development Program](#) (NHDP), which provides quality affordable homes to income-qualified homebuyers earning no more than 80 percent of the area median income. HLB's NHDP participation includes partnership and coordination with the [Houston Community Land Trust](#), which holds homeowners' underlying property to protect against rising property tax bills that threaten long term affordability. The City uses contracted builders to construct the homes on HLB property, and HLB is responsible for shepherding constructed homes through marketing and sale to qualified purchasers.





Mr. Clarence Green and his mother Ms. Carolyn Green in the kitchen of their new house



Sealy St.



HLB Staff at the Sunday Brunch and Launch for the NHDP/HLB Program in Acres Homes - January 2020

## 38 HOMES

were sold in 2019-20

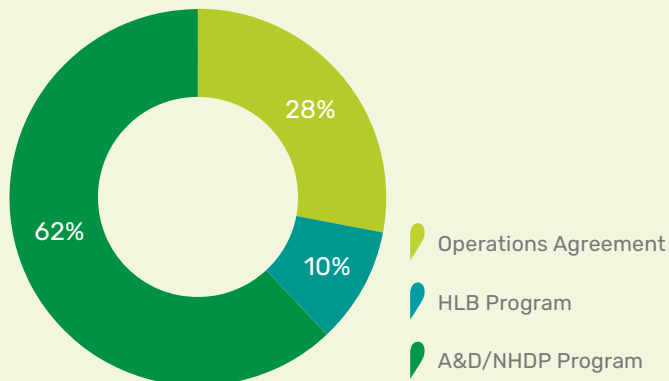
- To date, HLB helped 38 qualified homebuyers acquire new homes through our NHDP partnerships with the City and Houston Community Land Trust. Another 18 are under construction, and 38 are in pre-construction.
- Improvements to our website provided better information about HLB programs and NHDP homes for sale, allowing for more transparent access to data. Additionally, increased use of a website for our lot sales program helped streamline our ability to retain records of our lot sales and proposed housing projects.
- Expanded marketing outreach with superb listing brokers included an open house called "Brunch and Launch" promoting five properties open to the public in January 2020. The event drew more than 100 people from the neighborhood and across Houston to see the properties and get information on how to apply to the program. One property was 'staged' to give it a true feel of home (see photo). HLB will continue to experiment with ways to engage neighbors in the opportunities that our affordable homes provide.
- HLB has successfully acquired over 240,000 square feet of land on NHDP's behalf in four distinct neighborhoods; this represents 60-90 housing units, depending on the density of development. Another 200,000 square feet of property is under contract and being reviewed for feasibility. HLB has reviewed and/or considered more than 950 parcels for acquisition in various locations, and various sizes, across Houston. HLB will continue to build its inventory to support Houston's housing needs, and related community initiatives, as funding is available.

# FY20 END OF YEAR

of June 30, 2020

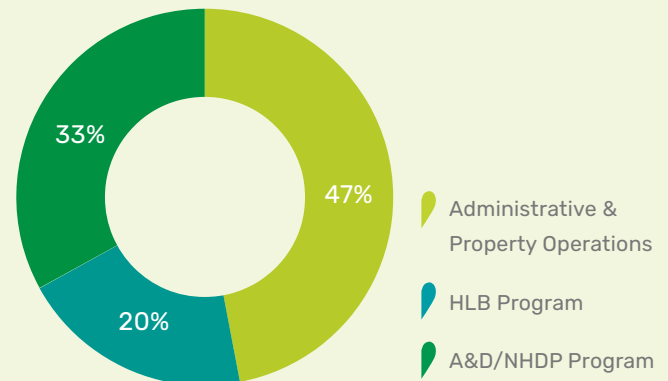
## FY 2020 Revenue

|                      |      |              |
|----------------------|------|--------------|
| Operations Agreement | 28%  | 1,354,115.61 |
| HLB Program          | 10%  | 481,957.89   |
| A&D/NHDP Program     | 62%  | 2,944,677.08 |
|                      | 100% | 4,780,750.58 |



## FY 2020 Expenditures

|                                      |      |              |
|--------------------------------------|------|--------------|
| Administrative & Property Operations | 47%  | 1,435,075.58 |
| HLB Program                          | 20%  | 626,551.14   |
| A&D/NHDP Program                     | 33%  | 1,010,153.29 |
|                                      | 100% | 3,071,780.01 |



- Financials reflect end of fiscal year, and many revenue/expenditures lag behind the fiscal year.
- HLB program revenue is reduced in FY20 based on processing prior LARA \$1 lot contracts, and expending additional funds for lot maintenance to scale up efforts from prior administration.
- Due to property acquisitions and the structure of the A&D, property acquisitions are reported as revenue, and are a balance sheet transaction in expenditures. Also, A&D revenue include administrative expenses, including staff time, that is required to operate the program. The revenue also has some reimbursements catchup from prior fiscal years' expenditures (pre-development expenses from 2019).
- A&D reflects the Acquisition and Development Agreement with the City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department (HCDD) that provides for the New Home Development Program referenced in this document

## FISCAL PERFORMANCE

As of April 1, 2020, our two foundational grant contracts were established with the City of Houston; these are administered by the City's Housing and Community Development Department. The two contracts include:

- The Operations Agreement, which provides for the organization's day-to-day administrative operations, lot maintenance, and traditional Home Building Initiative programming, and
- The Amended and Restated Acquisition and Development Agreement, which provides funding and program support to run the City's New Home Development Program.

Both documents can be found here.

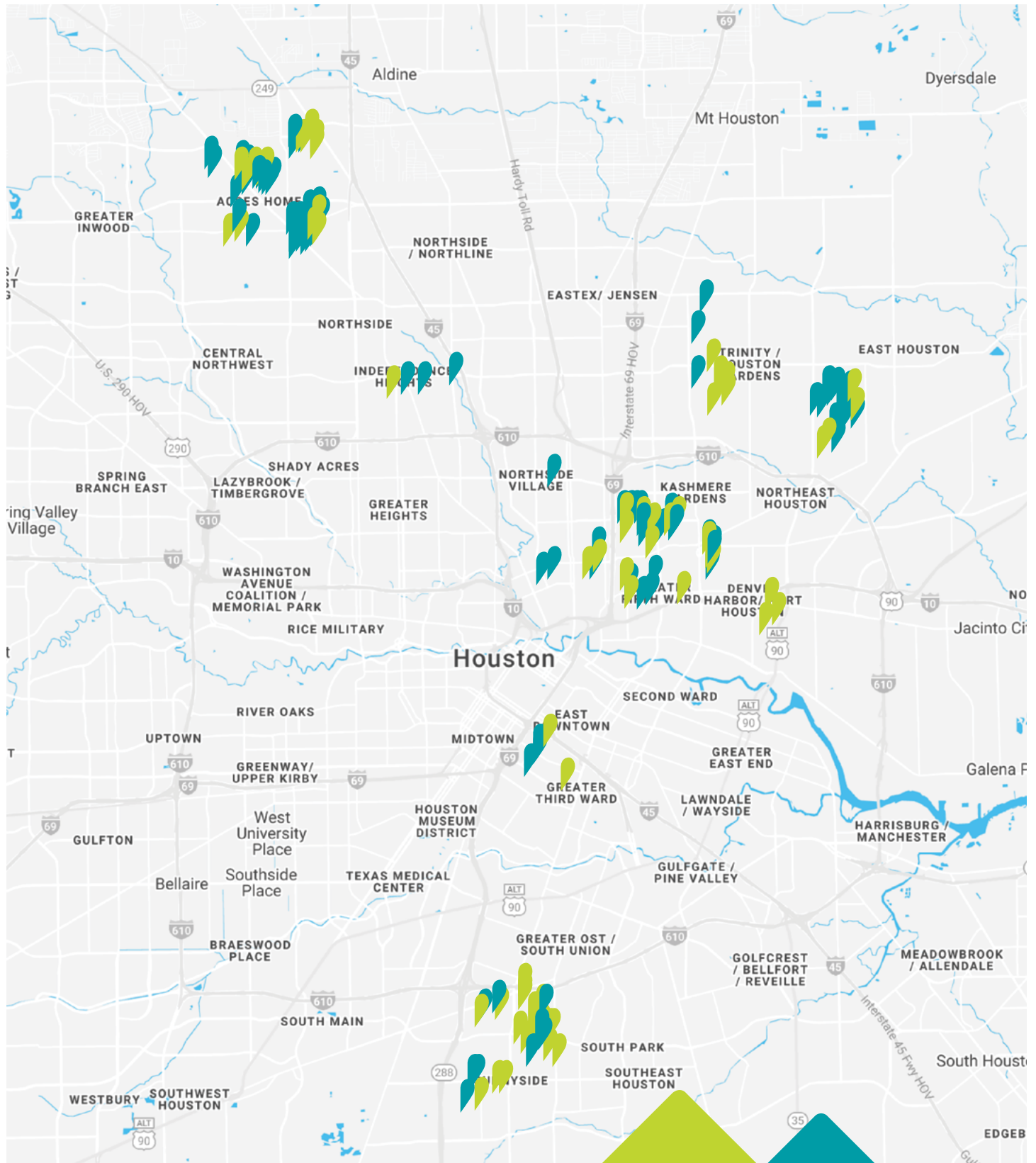




## DECEMBER 2020 PROPERTIES UNDER DEVELOPMENT

as of December 1, 2020

Property Inventory



- City of Houston Housing Programs
- In Development



## Staff

Jennifer Allison

Vice President,  
*Operations & Programs*

Marye Barba

Manager,  
*Inventory & Administrative*

David Benson

Director,  
*Organizational Excellence*

Ron Butler

Manager,  
*Property Maintenance*

Gonzalo Gonzalez

Vice President,  
*Accounting & Finance*

Darice Harris

Vice President,  
*Legal Counsel & Programs*

Anne Gatling Haynes

CEO | President

Ivan Zapata

Vice President,  
*Real Estate & Acquisitions*



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Houston, TX 77219  
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## Follow us!



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## LOOKING FORWARD

As 2020 concludes, HLB's board and staff are wrapping up a new strategic plan to guide a busy, productive 2021. HLB plans to pilot new programs for increasing production of quality affordable homes, increasing the range of home types and price points, and working with the community to consider ways for the organization to continue to support neighborhood needs, including broadening our efforts to recruit local builders and vendors in our neighborhood, and connect job-interested neighbors into our builders and vendors. HLB will continue to improve its partnership with City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department (HCDD) and the Houston Community Land Trust to support our common mission to provide quality housing at an affordable price throughout Houston.

## BACKGROUND

The Houston Land Bank (HLB) is a local government corporation created by the City of Houston to strategically, acquire, dispose and steward vacant, abandoned and damaged properties into productive use to catalyze transformative community and economic development. The organization was created in 1999 as the Land Assemblage Redevelopment Authority (LARA) and until 2018 much of its operations were administered by the City of Houston Housing and Community Development Department. For the 20 years of its existence, the organization's activities were focused to the acquisition of lots at tax auction and dispositions for specific purposes. In July of 2018 LARA changed its name to Houston Land Bank, expanded its scope to support comprehensive community development activities and hired independent staff who are building organizational capacity to continue to be a valuable partner for the City of Houston.



Read our  
**newsletter!**

## Thank you TO OUR COLLABORATORS

We thank so very much our extended family of colleagues at the City of Houston, especially the Houston Housing and Community Development Department (HCDD), and the contracted companies who make up our day to day efforts run smoothly: Greg Erwin and Mark Glanowski of Winstead PC; Gracie Saenz, Board Counsel; Conchita Reyes of Cruz Phillips/CR Financials Group; Tene Thomas of McConnell Jones; Patricia Garcia, Doeren Meyhew. Although too numerous to thank individually, we also thank our expanded list of lot maintenance vendors and their crews for being good neighbors: AD Construction & Development, Trans Teq Environmental Solutions, Inc., EA Professional Services, and Smarts-caping. We've tremendously enjoyed working with our listing brokers LaTisha Grant of TAS Realty Group and Andrea Cooksey of Exit Realty 360 and their teams, as well as strengthening our partnership with the Houston Community Land Trust to help Houston's homebuyers. Finally we would like to make a special thanks to all of our pre-qualified builders, who continue to be key partners to making our mission a reality. Please see the link of current builders [here](#).