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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 26, 2021

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**HOUSTON COALITION LED BY HOUSTON LAND BANK
RECEIVES \$600,000 FEDERAL BROWNFIELDS GRANT TO HELP TRANSFORM
VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES FOR NEW COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

A coalition led by the Houston Land Bank (HLB) in partnership with the City of Houston and Avenue Community Development Corp. has been selected to receive a \$600,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant from the National Brownfields Grant Program, HLB CEO and President Anne Gatling Haynes announced this week.

The award builds on and expands the reach of the City's Brownfields Redevelopment Program operated by Houston Public Works. The broad-based coalition being formed to guide the grant's implementation includes a variety of neighborhood and nonprofit stakeholders that are to make up a new Brownfields Advisory Committee.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines a brownfield as land for which expansion, redevelopment or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. The grant is to fund site assessments, cleanup planning, reuse strategies and related community engagement and public education toward advancing revitalization and environmental justice projects.

The effort to build healthier communities by addressing environmental issues is to focus on Houston's underserved communities, with 70 percent of the grant targeting the East End, Near Northside, Kashmere Gardens and Gulfton neighborhoods. These were selected based on community need and identification of a significant number of brownfields with high reuse probability; the remaining 30 percent of the grant is anticipated in other areas across the city.

Mayor Sylvester Turner hailed the new funding as an important step forward: "With this award, we will be able to build on our ongoing work to ensure healthy and safe neighborhoods in our city and Compete Communities initiative. This award provides additional resources to educate the public, provide environmental assessment, and advance the transformation of formerly commercial and industrial sites to more suitable community uses like housing, parks, and supportive services."

"The Houston Land Bank's mission is to transform vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties into neighborhood assets," HLB's Haynes added. "The land bank is thrilled to help convene a coalition of public and not-for-profit organizations to identify sites and to deploy the resources provided in this grant to advance those sites to support community needs."

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Avenue CDC Executive Director Mary Lawler also pointed to the potential for supporting new affordable homes and related improvements. "Avenue is pleased to provide pro bono support to this important initiative," Lawler said. "With the cost of housing rising throughout the city, this effort will help to restore properties to productive use, making them available for affordable housing and other neighborhood needs."

Next steps include development of a grant work plan by HLB, the City's Brownfields Redevelopment Program, and Avenue Community Development Corp. in concert with the EPA. Additional community stakeholders identified thus far include the Greater East End Management District, Houston Health Department, Buffalo Bayou Partnership, Connect Community, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Harris County Public Health, Seeds of the Soil, Texas Southern University, various Houston neighborhood associations, and the Black United Fund of Texas. Ultimately, the assessment coalition partners are to establish a Brownfields Advisory Committee to gather community guidance regarding target priorities, site selection and reuse strategies. Funding opportunities for eligible grant activities are to be open to the public and available through an application process to be designed in the coming months.

Houston Land Bank Background

HLB is a not-for-profit local government corporation incorporated in the State of Texas and is a component unit of the City of Houston. HLB is committed to be a strong, innovative partner in the equitable redevelopment of vacant, abandoned, or damaged properties in Houston's neighborhoods, and a good neighbor to the communities in which we work to provide affordable homes for low- and moderate-income Houstonians. HLB was established by the City of Houston in 1999 as the Land Assemblage and Redevelopment Authority (LARA), a local government corporation charged with facilitating redevelopment of vacant and/or tax-delinquent residential real estate in targeted Houston neighborhoods. HLB's 14-member Board of Directors includes representatives appointed by Houston's Mayor and City Council, Harris County, and the Houston Independent School District. HLB receives local funds from the City of Houston and generates additional revenue from the sale of lots and homes.

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