



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 20, 2021

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**NEW TEXAS LAND BANKING LAW
TO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF AFFORDABLE HOMES
AND IMPROVEMENT OF VACANT, ABANDONED OR DAMAGED PROPERTIES**

More affordable homes, flood resilience and community development are among the possibilities resulting from new state law supported by the Houston Land Bank (HLB) and adopted by the 87th Texas Legislature. The legislation – SB 1679 – became law on Sept. 1. It aligns with national best practices and is to enable expansion of HLB’s work toward acquisition and management of vacant, abandoned, deteriorated, or foreclosed properties into new productive use.

Creating a new Chapter 379H in the Texas Local Government Code and applicable to municipalities with a population of at least 2 million people, the legislation replaces Chapter 379D, created in 2005. Initially proposed by State Sen. Carol Alvarado (D-Houston, District 6), SB 1679 was mirrored by companion bill HB 4065, filed in the Texas House of Representatives by State Rep. Jarvis Johnson (D-Houston, District 139).

Since 1999, HLB has sold over 750 homes to first-time homebuyers (including 250 since 2016); another 125 affordable homes are in development through two programs supporting low- and moderate-income Houstonians. The new law will allow HLB to acquire and convert more properties to productive use for affordable homes, mixed-income housing, community-based economic development, food desert solutions, parks, and flood reduction.

"This legislation was drafted with the understanding that every community has its own set of unique challenges and qualities. Some areas may need affordable housing while others may need projects that mitigate their flooding issues. This proactive approach ensures that the projects taking place are meeting the needs of each community while at the same time getting rid of blighted untaxable lots that are both eye sores and public safety hazards," Sen. Alvarado said.

"This bill is about the people. Our legislation places properties back on the tax rolls and ensures underserved communities are provided adequate housing and community amenities," noted Rep. Johnson, whose district includes the Acres Homes neighborhood where HLB develops new homes.

HLB Board Chair Matt Zeis expressed appreciation to Rep. Johnson and Sen. Alvarado for their leadership in moving the legislation forward. “This is a big day for affordable housing advocates and those in need of safe places to live,” HLB Board Chair Matt Zeis added. “We’ve worked collaboratively with elected officials and housing advocates to ensure that what we’re creating is sustainable and moves the needle on enhancing the quality of life for Houstonians. It wouldn’t have happened without strong support from Senator Alvarado, Representative Johnson and other legislative allies, and we appreciate their efforts to expand our opportunities to support underserved neighborhoods across Houston and Harris County.”

The new law enables partnerships with public entities like flood control districts and municipal parks and recreation departments to support flood mitigation efforts. Further, the legislation facilitates land banks’ streamlined acquisition of properties at tax foreclosure sales without limiting property owners’ redemption rights.

Finally, the bill creates a joint interim committee to study land banks in the state, comparing to national best practices to assess powers, impact and initiatives on affordable housing, funding mechanisms, and impact/benefit to the tax base.

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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’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. For more information, visit www.houstonlandbank.org.