



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**HOUSTON LAND BANK COMPLETES IMPROVEMENTS
TO SUNNYSIDE COMMUNITY GARDEN WITH SUPPORT FROM AARP GRANT**

Upgrades at a community garden in Houston’s Sunnyside neighborhood are complete, offering improved accessibility for gardeners with raised soil beds, better walkways and perimeter lighting.

Funded in part with a \$9,950 grant from the AARP and supported by community volunteers, the Houston Land Bank (HLB) initiated the work at the Harry Holmes Healthy Harvest Community Garden in late summer and completed the improvements in early December. The garden is located on a vacant residential lot owned by HLB at 4646 Brinkley; it is managed by Urban Harvest and community volunteers who grow a variety of produce in more than a dozen gardening beds.

The new improvements raised the beds 8 inches with additional paver stones and soil, making it easier for the gardeners – most of whom are over 50 years old – to reach without bending over. Eight solar lights were installed around the garden’s perimeter to improve evening and early morning access, and crushed granite was installed between beds to prevent walkways from turning to mud after heavy rains. New signage in the garden highlights AARP’s contribution through its Community Challenge grant program, and four young fig trees planted at the garden’s front will increase the garden’s production while enhancing streetside appearance. Twelve community volunteers participated in the work, as did five HLB staff; additional support was provided by HLB vendors.

The project concluded with a December 11 community event that drew about 30 people. Limited in size because of the COVID-19 Omicron variant’s emergence, the event promoted cross-generational interactions (including children and grandparents) centered around gardening activities, and also offered information regarding financial literacy and homeownership opportunities available through HLB.

“This has been a great project, thanks to AARP’s financial support and the hard work of our friends at the community garden. The Harry Holmes Healthy Harvest garden will make it even easier for Sunnyside residents to use this community resource for better access to healthy food. HLB staff including Vice President Jen Allison were critical to finalizing these important improvements through the challenges of the newest COVID-19 wave,” noted Gonzalo Gonzalez, HLB’s chief operating officer and interim chief executive officer. “We really appreciate everyone who contributed, including our lot maintenance vendors

Smartscaping and Trans Teq Environmental Solutions and design firm Asakura Robinson, for their willingness to help formulate and implement the final plan.”

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Houston Land Bank Background

HLB is a not-for-profit local government corporation 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.

NOTE: Four photos follow. The first is the garden before work commenced. The second shows improvements in progress in November, and the final two photos show the completed garden at the December 11 community celebration. Please credit Houston Land Bank when using photos.





