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## **Houston Housing Authority, Oklahoma City Housing Collaborate to Creatively Solve Affordable Housing Scarcity**

*Affordable housing crisis exacerbated in the wake of Harvey*

**HOUSTON – (Oct. 31, 2017)** – When Hurricane Harvey tore through Texas, 84 families at Forest Green Townhomes in northeast Houston watched flood waters rise in their homes, while the city saw the already limited affordable housing options dwindle. However, thanks to a collaborative partnership between the [Houston Housing Authority](#) (HHA) and the Oklahoma City Housing Authority (OCHA), those 84 families will receive a clean, safe place to call home.

Forest Green is one of 28 properties owned by the HHA, a federally funded program providing affordable homes to the city's low-income, elderly and disabled residents. During the hurricane, seven HHA properties received significant damage, impacting over 950 families. At Forest Green, more than 80 percent of the townhomes needed to be vacated so that extensive repairs could begin to the uninhabitable units.

Houston had an affordable housing crisis prior to Harvey, which has further intensified since the storm. Ideally, the families at Forest Green either would've been moved to another public housing unit in the city or received a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) to cover a portion of the cost of a new home. However, a temporary funding [shortfall required the HHA](#) to stop issuing HCVs in April and, due to lack of resources, there aren't enough public housing units to relocate tenants.

"Our priority throughout Harvey recovery has remained the health and safety of our residents, so when it came to Forest Green, we knew we needed to act swiftly with an inventive solution," HHA President and CEO Tory Gunsolley said.

To assist the families at Forest Green, HHA called on a network of housing authorities across the nation to provide HCVs so residents could relocate to any voucher-accepting unit in Houston or the U.S.

The HCV program, formerly known as Section 8, is federally-funded and allows low-income families, seniors and persons with disabilities to live in rental housing in the private market at

an affordable price. The administering housing authority pays a portion of the rent directly to the landlord, and families pay a share of their income towards the remaining rent balance.

OCHA answered the call for help by lending vouchers to cover all the families at Forest Green that experienced flood damage to their homes.

“Our hearts go out to Houston and those impacted by Hurricane Harvey,” OCHA Executive Director Mark Gillett said. “We are happy to serve the families who need safe, clean homes and we stand ready to do our part to help our Texas neighbors recover from the storm.”

With housing prices in Houston steadily increasing and incomes remaining stagnant, many families struggle to meet the government’s affordable housing standard of spending less than 30 percent of total household income on rent. While HHA is serving more Houstonians this year than ever before and is at full capacity, 91 percent of the eligible 392,000 low-income households in Houston are not receiving any type of assistance due to limited funding.

Prior to the storm, HHA actively sought opportunities to build new affordable housing developments in the city, and as a part of the post-recovery plan, the authority will continue to do so while providing immediate relocation assistance to affected residents. HHA is also working with the Houston Apartment Association and local landlords to quickly find voucher-accepting units for the families at Forest Green.

“Now, more than ever, it is vital to unite as a nation and community to support impacted Houstonians with tangible solutions,” HHA Board Chair LaRence Snowden said. “We are incredibly grateful to the OKC Housing Authority for stepping up to help families during this trying time and to Houston landlords for opening their doors to voucher-holders.”

#### **ABOUT THE HHA:**

The Houston Housing Authority provides affordable homes and services to more than 58,000 low-income Houstonians, including over 17,000 families housed through the Housing Choice Voucher Program and another 5,700 living in 25 public housing and tax credit developments around the city. HHA also administers one of the nation’s largest voucher program exclusively serving homeless veterans. More information about the Houston Housing Authority can be found at [www.housingforhouston.com](http://www.housingforhouston.com).

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