

Earl Hatcher Commons (formerly known as Magnolia Glen)

A Permanent Supportive Housing Project

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is Earl Hatcher Commons?

Earl Hatcher Commons (EHC) is a vacant hotel located at 3815 Gulf Freeway that has been purchased by The Non-Profit Housing Corporation of Greater Houston/Magnolia Glen, Inc. (Housing Corporation) for conversion into permanent supportive housing. Initially consisting of 217 hotel rooms, the project has been redesigned to include 184 efficiency and one-bedroom units for adult men and women with incomes at or below 50% of the area median income (AMI). One hundred twenty of the units are replacement housing units for other PSH (Permanent Supportive Housing) that flooded during Hurricane Ike and will be demolished.

Earl Hatcher Commons is NOT:

- A treatment facility,
- A halfway house,
- A Soup kitchen;
- Transitional housing, nor
- SRO (single resident occupancy) housing.

What is Permanent Supportive Housing?

Permanent supportive housing (PSH) is a proven solution in providing a home to those most in need of housing. It combines affordable housing with services that help people who face complex challenges to live with stability, autonomy and dignity. PSH is a nationally recognized model that is shown to improve housing stability, employment, mental and physical health, and school attendance; and reduces active substance use. Research and studies of PSH throughout the country show people in supportive housing live more stable and productive lives.

What is the project mission?

The mission of the project is to provide a safe, supportive living environment for formerly homeless persons to allow for the improved quality of life including:

- Long-term housing stability;
- Better health outcomes;
- Reduction in use of substances;
- Reduction in use of public crisis systems including the jail; and
- Increased access to mainstream services (employment, rehabilitation, and other services).

What will this project cost?

The project is currently funded at \$9.3 million for acquisition, design and construction. It is anticipated that additional funds will be needed for construction, and such funds are currently being identified.

How will this project be funded?

The project has been funded with Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funds and will serve as replacement housing for housing flooded by Hurricane Ike. It is anticipated that grants from private foundations will also be utilized.

How was this project selected for funding?

This project was selected through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process published by the Harris County Community Services Department in November 2011. The Non-Profit Housing Corporation submitted a proposal through this process, and the project was reviewed and recommended for funding. Allocation of funds for this project was approved by Harris County Commissioners Court on July 10, 2012.

Who can live at Earl Hatcher Commons?

Adult men and women with incomes at or below 50% of the area median income (AMI) can live at EHC. Small families including children may be allowed to rent the 1-bedroom units. Occupancy per unit will be limited to ensure no overcrowding.. Persons convicted of sex offenses or violent crimes will not be eligible to reside at EHC.

How will residents be selected?

120 units will be occupied by victims of Hurricane Ike who lost housing after Hurricane Ike. Other units and future vacancies will be available for lease to persons enrolled through a Coordinated Access System that connects formerly homeless persons to permanent housing and supportive services

What services will residents receive?

A comprehensive array of services will be made available on site to the residents to provide the supportive environment to allow them to sustain their housing. Services will include but are not limited to case management, employment and training, life skills training, peer support services, recovery support services, mental health and physical health care, and social and recreational services. Services will be limited to persons living on site and not open to persons coming in from the street.

Will residents be required to work?

Residents will be encouraged to seek work when appropriate, and increase income. Those residents interested in training and employment opportunities will be provided with access to those services. Work is not a requirement but residents will be responsible for payment of rent. In certain cases, residents will be provided services to access disability income when applicable.

Will tenants be wandering the neighborhood in search of food or handouts?

No. Their apartments are all equipped with kitchens and the Food Bank will also have an operation on site.

Will homeless persons from the area congregate at the site?

No. Only tenants may enter the premises.

Will rent be charged on all apartments?

Yes. Historically, about 25% of the tenants are employed, 50% will be receiving some form of social security or disability income, and the remainder will receive assistance in obtaining employment and/or other sources of income. This model has proven to be a successful method of returning formerly homeless individuals and families to being productive members of the community.

How long will they be able to live there?

Similar to any apartment complex, each resident will sign a lease and be required to uphold the conditions of their lease to continue to reside in their unit. Residents may reside in their unit as long as they abide by the lease agreement. At the end of the term of the lease the resident may move, or renew their lease to continue to reside at the property.

What if residents are using drugs?

Use of illegal substances is prohibited on the property. Residents observed engaging in such illegal activities will be reported to the proper authorities as well as engaged to seek substance abuse services.

Under what conditions will a resident be evicted?

Residents who violate their lease agreement will be evicted. However, property management and case management will work closely together to support the resident from returning to homelessness, and only resort to the eviction process as a last resort.

Why does our community need this project?

Homeless persons are frequent users of high-cost public crisis systems, such as jails and hospitals. In our community during a one year period 2011-2012, 920 persons were released from the County Jail 5 or more times after sentence completion. Of these persons, 579 (63%) were homeless and many were also disabled. Lack of housing is the primary factor in their use of such crisis systems. Our community needs this project to reduce the taxpayers' burden for funding such crisis systems, and provide an effective and humane alternative to chronic homelessness.

Is it realistic to think this project will end homelessness?

This one project will not end homelessness in our community, but will go a long way towards providing an environment that supports persons who have multiple barriers that have kept them homeless. A coordinated system of access to housing will ultimately help our community end chronic homelessness, or long-term homelessness for individuals who face these barriers.

Where can I get more information about Houston, Harris County's homeless population and plans to address it?

The Coalition for the Homeless of Houston/Harris County is a leading source of information related to homelessness in our community. Please visit their website for more information:

www.homelesshouston.org. Also, see *Opening Doors*,

www.usich.gov/PDF/OpeningDoors_2010_FSPPreventEndHomeless.pdf, the federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness throughout the country.

How will the building be secured?

Security is of the utmost importance to ensure the safety of our residents. The building will have on-site property management staffing, security cameras, and the Houston Police Department has expressed interest in locating an on-site office presence. The property will be fully fenced as well, with clearly marked entry points, and exit points.

Will this project drive down property values?

Based on studies of similar projects, Earl Hatcher Commons will not negatively impact surrounding property values. In a report published by the United Way of Greater Houston in 2010, it was concluded that permanent supportive housing units have no negative impact on their neighbor's property values. The study reviewed six properties both new construction and acquisition/rehabilitation and determined that property values closest to the supportive housing increased at a higher rate than those in the larger neighborhood. The findings in this local report are consistent with similar findings in other communities across the country. When developed properly, permanent supportive housing as well as affordable housing can become an enhancement to neighborhoods and cause increase in property values.

How can our community have input into the design or operation of this project?

Upon completion of the preliminary design plans, the Harris County Community Services Department will host a community planning meeting, called a Charette, to solicit community and service provider input on the proposed use of space in the project. As well, the community is invited to suggest service projects on site to help integrate new residents into the community. Such service projects could include community gardening projects, recreational activities, sewing clubs, or similar activities that will truly create a home environment at the project.

What is the process for addressing neighborhood complaints? Who is the contact person for the project?

Question, inquiries or complaints may be submitted to the Housing Corporation, or to Harris County Community Services Department:

The Non-Profit Housing Corporation of Greater Houston, (713) 526-9470

Harris County Community Services Department, (713) 578-2001

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