



Dedication of 1,000th Home Changes Neighborhood



On a beautiful April morning a few weeks ago, Dallas Area Habitat quietly dedicated its 1,000th house. It was mostly a low-key family event – not much public fanfare – with the new homeowner and her proud family standing in celebration with her proud Habitat family of staff, donors, and volunteers. It was particularly fitting that our designated 1,000th house is in Mill City, one of our Dream Dallas neighborhoods near Fair Park – “designated” because, with hammers flying, the new home count rises weekly.

Mill City, south of Fair Park and nestled alongside the former site of Dallas Housing Authority’s old sprawling Frazier Courts public housing complex, has struggled with neglect and disinvestment. With a homeownership rate of

only 30% (2010 U.S. Census) and about a third of all residential lots vacant (2011 DCAD), Mill City is desperate for homeowners who are invested in its future. Habitat has spent about \$15 million in Mill City.

The Dallas Morning News recently ran an editorial on the City's high concentration of dilapidated properties and touched on Dallas Area Habitat for Humanity's efforts to revitalize struggling communities through homeownership and housing rehabilitation. (To read the editorial click [here](#).) That editorial speaks forcefully to the importance of homeowners in depopulating neighborhoods. We agree. The heroes of our revitalization efforts – real urban pioneers – are the homebuyers willing to invest their money in building up neighborhoods.



Economic and Tax Impact of Habitat Homeowners

Every 100 new Habitat homes creates about 26 annually-recurring jobs: in retail, public services, education, finance, and other sectors providing the goods and services every household needs. A 2010 study of the economic impact of Dallas Area Habitat for Humanity, done under the auspices of SMU's Cox School of Business, determined that every \$1 spent by Habitat generates \$3.18 of regional economic activity. About 40% of the \$3.18 is economic activity generated by our families' spending. While that economic activity is important to the entire North Texas region, it is particularly impactful in struggling neighborhoods. Because Habitat families generally stay in their homes for many years, this is a long-term investment in a community.

Dallas Habitat homeowners pay property tax, in Texas, a critical component of government funding. This is essential public funding used for public schools, community colleges, hospital district, city and county services. Dallas Habitat homeowners pay over \$2M annually in property taxes.

Intangibles

Neighborhoods benefit from increased levels of homeownership in ways that are less tangible. For example, homeowners are more likely than renters to participate in local organizations like neighborhood associations and parent teacher organizations. One of Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings' goals for southern Dallas is to add 30 new neighborhood associations over the next 12 months and to activate and energize the current ones. Research tells us that it will be homeowners who carry that ball.



Homeowners are far less likely to move than renters. Homeowners remain in their home for an average of 13 years, while renters move every 2.5 years. A Census report on geographical mobility found that even when controlling for differences in age, income and marital status, a person who rents is significantly more likely to move in a given year than is a homeowner. This is important because residential stability strengthens social, family, and neighborhood bonds. Because of residential stability, homeowners help reduce a community's crime rate. For struggling neighborhoods like Mill City, an influx of committed homeowners is critical to

its future.

When it comes to creating lasting, quality communities, the key is not our bricks and mortar; it is the flesh and blood Habitat homeowners who invest their incomes and their

futures in our communities. To learn more about Dallas Area Habitat for Humanity's homeownership program, contact us at 214-678-2300 or at ni@dallas-habitat.org