FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact
Christa D. Stoneham, Chief Executive Officer and President, Houston Land Bank
281-655-4600 | cstoneham@houstonlandbank.org

Texas Bar Foundation Awards $40,000 to HLB Fund to Help Harris County Families Clear Title

Clearing Title Building Legacy brings title-clearing legal help and estate planning education to low-income homeowners and heirs

HOUSTON (November 10, 2026): HLB Fund, the nonprofit philanthropic and programmatic arm of Houston Land Bank (HLB), has been awarded a $40,000 grant from the Texas Bar Foundation to launch Clearing Title Building Legacy. The one-year project helps low-income Harris County families resolve heir property and clouded title issues while educating residents on estate planning and property rights.

Heir property occurs when a homeowner dies without a will or without probate, leaving ownership divided among heirs who hold no clear, marketable title. Families in this position cannot sell, insure, or borrow against the home. Many cannot access home repair programs or homestead exemptions, and they face the risk of tax foreclosure and the loss of generational wealth.

“A family home can carry challenges that are invisible from the street: an estate that was never probated, ownership divided among heirs, and back taxes that grow each year,” said Christa D. Stoneham, Chief Executive Officer and President of Houston Land Bank. “Clearing title is how Houston Land Bank returns land to productive use. The Texas Bar Foundation’s investment puts that expertise to work directly for Harris County families, so the homes they built and inherited stay in the family.”

With this grant, HLB will provide direct title-clearing assistance for resident-owned homes for the first time. The work builds on proven capacity: in 2025, HLB identified 117 outstanding title issues and cleared 59 titles. All legal work under the grant will be supervised by HLB’s in-house General Counsel and coordinated with the Harris County Public Probate Administrator’s Office.

Grant funds cover the direct costs of resolving title for eligible families, including title searches, heirship investigations, affidavits of heirship and other curative documents, lien resolution, probate filings, and court costs. The grant also supports public legal information clinics, printed guides and workbooks, and case management technology that tracks each case from intake through resolution. Every grant dollar goes directly to project costs: resolving titles, educating the public, and building the systems that move families from legal uncertainty to clear ownership.

The project builds on a Memorandum of Understanding that HLB and the Harris County Public Probate Administrator’s Office executed in December 2025 to coordinate referrals,

probate case management, and community education. Through the Family Home Workshop Series and public legal information clinics, residents will receive accurate information on probate, heirship, wills, and estate planning, along with initial screening and referral into direct title-clearing assistance when their case qualifies. Clearing Title Building Legacy will serve 200 Harris County residents during the grant year, with a focus on seniors and families on fixed incomes.

Since its inception in 1965, the Texas Bar Foundation has awarded more than $32 million in grants to law-related programs. Supported by members of the State Bar of Texas, the Texas Bar Foundation is the nation's largest charitably-funded bar foundation.

Harris County residents with questions about heir property, probate, or clearing title to a family home can contact Houston Land Bank at 281-655-4600 or visit houstonlandbank.org.

###

About Houston Land Bank and HLB Fund

Houston Land Bank (HLB) is a local government corporation created by the City of Houston and operating under Chapter 379H of the Texas Local Government Code. HLB acquires, stabilizes, and repurposes vacant, tax-delinquent, and environmentally challenged properties, transforming distressed land into community assets that support affordable housing, neighborhood revitalization, and long-term community stability. Since 2018, HLB has supported the construction and sale of more than 385 affordable homes. HLB Fund is the 501(c)(3) philanthropic and programmatic arm of Houston Land Bank. Learn more at houstonlandbank.org.