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HARRIS COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY HONORED WITH TWO NAHRO AWARDS OF MERIT FOR MODEL HOUSING SOLUTIONS

-- RECOGNITION PLACES AFFORDABLE HOUSING SOLUTIONS IN NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT --

August 25, 2008 (HOUSTON) – The Harris County Housing Authority (HCHA) has been honored by the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) with two Awards of Merit for developing innovative housing solutions. The awards recognize the housing authority's signature, state-of-the-art single-family affordable housing development and its Independence homeownership program.

The initiatives were awarded based on the housing authority's approach in developing innovative affordable housing and opportunities for families to become self-sufficient. This recent success has reinforced the housing authority's record as the leading housing authority in America. In fact, the HCHA was recently recognized for the sixth consecutive year as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's highest performer in the nation.

The HCHA's signature single-family affordable housing community known as Waterside Court was recognized for its response to the demand for large-sized families who are in need high quality single family housing in a credit tight market who do not wish to purchase a home in today's market. The gated community, which was built through a public/private partnership, features amenities equal to or greater than some of Houston's with nicest suburban subdivisions, as well as a host of community services.

"The use of a public/private partnership provides balance for both market-rate housing and affordable housing," said Guy Rankin, CEO and Executive Director of the HCHA. "The final product is a shining example of what people can do when they work together."

In addition to its Award of Merit for Waterside Court, the HCHA also received the same honor for its Independence Program, which was created in early 2006 specifically for Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) recipients who want to buy a home, but lack the resources to do so. To date, the program has helped 11 low-to-moderate income Harris County families to achieve the American dream: homeownership. The HCHA designed the program for families that are using their vouchers as a stepping-stone toward financial stability and self-sufficiency, and who would otherwise consider homeownership impossible.

"Unlike traditional housing programs, which focus on helping local citizens meet their short-term assistance needs, the HCHA's Independence Program looks at the bigger picture—assisting those in need by providing lasting, self-sufficiency solutions," continued Rankin.

Through the program, the HCHA secures down-payment assistance and a significant portion of closing costs, in addition to a broad spectrum of social services, including caseworker

assistance to help guide prospective homebuyers through the process of finding a realtor and a mortgage company willing to work with a non-traditional buyer. The program ensures success by requiring families to go through post-purchase counseling, credit counseling and other services.

Waterside Court has been nominated for NAHRO's National Award of Excellence, which recognizes outstanding innovation and achievement in housing and community development programs throughout the country. HCHA will know in October if has developed what many have already considered the best single-family rental community in America for 2008.

"NAHRO members are consistently on the forefront of innovation in the affordable housing industry," said NAHRO President Renée Rooker." Their success is truly remarkable: our members see the concrete results of the efforts they are making in their neighborhoods and communities to become better places to live. The winners of the Awards of Merit have created programs that can be used as models across the nation."

The NAHRO Awards of Merit provide national recognition to the achievement and innovation of its members throughout the country and provides additional opportunity to inform the public of the best in housing and community development.

About the Harris County Housing Authority

The Harris County Housing Authority operates housing-choice voucher programs and family self-sufficiency programs for more than 2,000 residents of Harris County. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has given the Authority its highest performance rating for six years in a row. For more information visit: www.hchatexas.org.

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