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## **Community Village Project in Lake Highlands Announces Partnership Changes**

*City of Refuge assumes lead role*

(DALLAS, TX) – The City of Dallas Economic Development Committee today received a briefing memo that will place an item on an upcoming City Council agenda to designate City of Refuge – Dallas as the nonprofit organization that will execute the option agreement for the pilot project at 12000 Greenville Avenue previously approved on June 24, 2020. Leadership for this project is working to ensure best practices and collaboration at the highest level to bring assets to this community, including an urban farm, farmers market, restaurant, coffee shop, co-working space and workforce innovation hub, while serving the surrounding community and vulnerable individuals living in this area of our city.

City of Refuge (COR), which had already been serving as a key project partner, has assumed the role of lead organization, with Mike Reinsel, CEO of City of Refuge – Dallas, serving as the project's interim executive director. Bruce Deel, founder and CEO of City of Refuge – Atlanta, will serve as a key advisor and consultant to the project and has pledged COR's fundraising, marketing and branding teams to work closely with local partners as the project moves forward. City of Refuge – Atlanta has more than 20 years of experience and affiliate partnerships with national corporations, several of which have expressed interest in participation in this development as an extension of the mission.

"I want to express my appreciation to Daron and the entire team at Bonton Farms for their roles in helping this concept grow into an innovative project that led to an option agreement on the land from the City of Dallas, support from the community, and interest from numerous partners and potential funders," said Reinsel. "Project leadership, partners, philanthropists and other stakeholders remain committed to creating a unique place at 12000 Greenville Avenue that benefits the Lake Highlands and Hamilton Park communities."

This action reflects a mutual decision among Bonton Farms leadership and collaborative project partners. A new name for the project will be revealed at a later date, but the project will continue to embody much of the mission and core values of Bonton Farms.

"After in-depth planning discussions, deliberation and prayer, it became clear that City of Refuge is the best partner, considering its depth of experience in serving the homeless community," said Trae Williams, board chair of Bonton Farms. "We remain extremely supportive of the Lake Highlands project and look forward to future discussions about how Bonton Farms can help."

Over the past few years, Bonton Farms has experienced exponential growth driven by its mission to restore lives, create jobs and ignite hope in what was once a forgotten and neglected neighborhood in southern Dallas. Despite rapid growth, the pressures of a pandemic and increasing demands on its programs, the urban farm, café and market at Bonton Farms continue to build community and empower neighbors to thrive.

“The needs in the Bonton neighborhood remain extensive,” said Daron Babcock, founder and executive director of Bonton Farms. “Providing safe and affordable housing, and health and wellness are the next essential components we are focused on to ensure those we serve continue to thrive.”

Steve Van Amburgh, CEO of development firm KDC, has agreed to help with project management, oversight and procurement of construction-related needs. Bobby Page, founding partner of JPI, will serve as a development advisor and will assist with fundraising efforts. Van Amburgh and Page are providing pro bono services because of their passion for helping the vulnerable and homeless populations in Dallas.

“We’re fortunate to have assembled local and experienced leaders to ensure the project meets the ambitious vision for this development,” said Deel. “Steve, Bobby and their partners bring a combined 80 years of real estate experience to the project. We have no doubt that the design, buildings, spaces and function of the village will become a place that exudes excellence and is enjoyed by the entire community.”

### **About the Project**

The project at 12000 Greenville Avenue is a community asset and unique ecosystem focused on relationships that addresses core human needs and provides customized pathways for the most disadvantaged residents in the Lake Highlands area of Dallas to reach their potential.

This innovative project will replicate the mission and core values established in southern Dallas by Bonton Farms and combine it with the collective impact model from City of Refuge in Atlanta, as well as best practices from other cities and organizations.

An urban farm, a farm-to-table café, a workforce innovation hub, primary and behavioral healthcare, and tiny homes will all be located at one site in a holistic model to build job skills and secure long-term employment opportunities to empower long-term thriving for those being served.

This project will provide people experiencing homelessness with the necessary services and environment to recover, while creating a sense of community that is connected to and integrated with the surrounding neighborhoods.

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