

HOUSTON | RESIDENTIAL

Affordable Housing At Critical Stage

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Avenue Meadows is under construction by Avenue, a nonprofit affordable home developer.

HOUSTON—The Northline community near the city's urban core, long known for its rich history, is home to approximately 16,000 people—more than 32% of which live below the federal poverty level, compared to Houston's overall poverty rate of 23%. Nearly 25% of residents are housing cost-burdened, spending 30% or more of income on housing costs.

In order to fill this void for safe and affordable housing in that neighborhood, a new project is now under construction. [Avenue](#), a nonprofit affordable home developer, has expanded its development portfolio with the addition of an affordable community, Avenue Meadows, slated to be complete before the end of the year.

"Houston's affordable housing crisis, which has been exacerbated by the devastating impact of [Hurricane Harvey](#), has put homeownership out of reach for many low and moderate-income residents, making investment in quality affordable homes more important than ever," said

Donna Espadas, treasurer of Avenue's board of trustees and a resident of the Northline community. "As an organization, Avenue is proud to lead the way in working to preserve affordability in our communities and in developing healthy, affordable homes that improve the quality of life for our city's working families."

The development features 10 energy-efficient single-family homes targeted for low to moderate-income, as well as market-rate buyers. Designed and constructed by design-build firm, [studioMET](#), the two-story three-bedroom/1.5-bath homes offer slightly less than 1,200 square feet on 5,000-square-foot fenced-in lots. Prices will range from \$179,000 to \$189,000—compared to Houston's median home price of approximately \$226,200.

"Although quality affordable housing plays a critical role in our city's health and wellness, Houstonians continue to face escalating housing costs in and around the city's urban core that are compromising affordability for low- and moderate-income residents," said Mary Lawler, executive director of Avenue.

According to Lawler, much of the existing housing stock in the area is aging, and in need of repair and reinvestment. In addition, the affordability need is reaching new heights.

"The increase in housing costs has been pretty dramatic, while incomes have remained fairly stagnant," Lawler tells [GlobeSt.com](#). "Avenue was determined to reduce costs to make housing affordable to buyers in Northline, where the incomes are below average. We are also working with buyers to provide access to down payment assistance."

All homes in this latest development have an energy-efficient design and function, with ENERGY STAR appliances, water-conserving plumbing fixtures, flexible PEX plumbing, high-performance windows and programmable thermostats for energy conservation. The homes will also feature exterior finishes including chrome hardware, low-maintenance HardiePlank exterior siding and drought-tolerant plants.

Situated at the intersection of Meadow Lea and Madie drives, Avenue Meadows has access to a wide variety of community amenities including Clark Park and Community Center, Moody Neighborhood Library and the MD Anderson YMCA. The community also offers close proximity to the Northline Transit Center, which links all of the area's bus routes to the North Corridor light rail line that connects residents to downtown, Hermann Park and Texas Medical Center.

"As architects, we have a social responsibility in shaping the way our cities look. A diversity of housing types is a critical part of that equation and within that is the need for quality affordable housing," said Stephen Andrews, architect and principal for [studioMET](#). "At StudioMET, we have a strong passion about making good design accessible to everyone and working on these types of projects aligns with those core values."

In recent years, Avenue, a HUD-certified agency, has constructed several affordable housing communities in the greater Northside community. In the neighboring Near Northside community, Avenue has developed Fulton Gardens, a 49-unit senior apartment development that is situated along the METRORail; Avenue Place, a 95-unit single family development; Avenue Station, a 68-unit multifamily complex; and Avenue Terrace, a 192-unit multifamily complex.

These developments offer Houstonians affordable housing prices, as well as amenities including after-school programs and community enrichment opportunities.



Lisa Brown ›

Lisa Brown is an editor for the south and west regions of GlobeSt.com. She has 25-plus years of real estate experience, with a regional PR role at Grubb & Ellis and a national communications position at MMI. Brown also spent 10 years as executive director at NAIOP San Francisco Bay Area chapter, where she led the organization to achieving its first national award honors and recognition on Capitol Hill. She has written extensively on commercial real estate topics and edited numerous pieces on the subject.

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