

AUSTIN, GARFIELD PARK, NORTH LAWNSDALE

# Affordable Townhomes Come To East Garfield Park To Offset Rising Housing Costs — And With The Hope Of Bringing Back Working-Class Families

The Harrison Row Townhomes will be held in a covenant to keep the homes affordable for 30 years, a move that aims to prevent more gentrification in the area.




Pascal Sabino 8:54 AM CDT on Apr 1, 2021



**Credit:** Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

Benjamin and Venesia Johnson take a tour of their new unit at the ribbon-cutting for the first completed residences at Harrison Row Townhomes in East Garfield Park on March 25, 2021.



**Credibility:**  Original Reporting  On the Ground  Sources Cited

**EAST GARFIELD PARK** — The first set of homes in a West Side affordable housing development have been completed, bringing cost-effective options to an area where housing costs are rising faster than any other part of the city.

The seven three-bedroom houses at the Harrison Row Townhomes, built by Structured Development, are designed for families earning a combined income of up to \$100,000. When completed, the Harrison Row Townhomes will have at least 50 affordable family homes at 2849–59 W. Congress Parkway, a former industrial site that has been vacant for 20 years.

The houses will be bound to a covenant with the Chicago Community Land Trust for 30 years to “preserve that affordability and mitigate any future displacement from encroaching gentrification,” said Michael Drew, founding principle at Structured Development. The towhomes will start at \$229,000.

“It provides a significant investment in a previously under-invested neighborhood and provides a stable housing option,” Drew said.





**Credit:** Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

The first completed residences at Harrison Row Townhomes in East Garfield Park on March 25, 2021.

Structured Development is building the homes as part of its obligations under the city's Affordable Requirements Ordinance. It requires developers receiving city assistance on a residential project to make a certain percentage of units affordable, build affordable homes at a separate site or pay a fee.

The Garfield Park homes are part of the developer's affordable housing requirement stemming from the Shops at Big Deahl, a mixed-use complex the firm is building in the Near North Side, which will also have some affordable units on site.

The Harrison Row Townhomes are being built as a joint venture with Fain's Development, a Black-owned company based in Garfield Park. Fain's took a backseat for the first seven homes, but it will have a financial stake in the next phase of the project, which will build 13 duplexes with three bedrooms per unit.

The partnership will allow the local company to share in profits and gain experience in building affordable homes, which require more expertise than market-rate houses, said Fain's principal Kevin Brinson.

"These are things that we're going to have to know if we're able to take this experience on our resume ... to be able to do future practice," Brinson said. "It shows us everything from beginning to end. ... That gives us an edge over everybody else."

Brinson is a lifelong West Sider and has lived in Garfield Park for decades, so preserving affordability is a priority for his company, he said.

An analysis of home prices by the Institute of Housing Studies showed that in 2018, East Garfield Park property values increased by 20 percent, the highest growth in the city.



“We’re talking about an area that’s being gentrified right now. And there’s an opportunity to bring back working-class families,” Brinson said.



**Credit:** Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago

Ald. Michael Burnett Jr. (27th) and J. Michael Drew pose with Benjamin and Venesia Johnson, who are moving into a unit at the first completed residences at Harrison Row Townhomes in East Garfield Park on March 25, 2021.

Only first-time homebuyers are eligible to buy the houses, and the buyers must be within specific income limits. The properties must be owner-occupied, and the homes can’t be rented out.

The covenant also restricts how much homeowners can sell the houses for if they later move away. Any buyers for the next 30 years must also fall under the same income eligibility requirements, Drew said.

“They will not be able to benefit from flipping or gentrification. It is limited to another affordable income-qualified family that would buy the unit. So it provides stability,” Drew said.

*Pascal Sabino is a Report for America corps member covering Austin, North Lawndale and Garfield Park for Block Club Chicago.*

*[Subscribe to Block Club Chicago](#). Every dime we make funds reporting from Chicago's neighborhoods.*

*Already subscribe? [Click here](#) to support Block Club [with a tax-deductible donation](#).*



**Pascal Sabino**

**Read More:** [Affordable Housing](#) [Garfield Park Community Council](#)

## The Latest

LAKEVIEW, WRIGLEYVILLE, NORTHALSTED

### **WOOGMS Labor Day Parade Returning For 60th Year: 'Everybody Marches, Nobody [Just] Watches'**

"Everybody marches, nobody (just) watches," is the motto for the parade, which invites people from across the Chicago area to march.

**Jake Wittich** 1 hour ago



LAKEVIEW, WRIGLEYVILLE, NORTHALSTED

### **Here's How To Participate In The Southport Neighbors Association's 2nd Annual Yard Sale**

People within the Southport Neighbors Association's boundaries can register to participate in its annual yard sale on Sept. 24.

**Jake Wittich** 1 hour ago

