

## Nine months After Hurricane Harvey: Team Rubicon is Rebuilding Homes in Houston

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By Holly Chadwick

Nine months after the category four Hurricane Harvey reached landfall on Aug. 25, 2017, Team Rubicon is in the middle of a pilot program to rebuild homes in Houston. They are leading the efforts to rebuild homes, free of charge, for vulnerable homeowners who would likely not be able to rebuild otherwise. Operations began in March and now at the beginning of June 2018, Team Rubicon has completed three homes with six in progress and has a goal to rebuild 100 homes in the next two years.

The plan to launch a rebuild pilot in Houston was made in the immediate weeks after Hurricane Harvey. While Team Rubicon was in the thick of their largest response operation to date, it was apparent many in Houston would need long-term recovery help. Generally known for getting the job done in demolition and response work, the rebuild pilot has proved TR is “capable of turning a gutted house back into a home,” says David Venables, deputy director, Rebuild Operations. From September 2017 to February 2018, the groundwork was laid for the rebuild; staffing plans, training, process manuals, warehouse space, all had to be established quickly in order to serve those still in need.

Now, the model is not a cookie-cutter approach to rebuilding. The Houston Rebuild team is not only hanging drywall, taping and finishing, each house is a completely scoped out project and team members are even sitting down with homeowners to select paint colors, floor samples and cabinet finishes. From partnering with nonprofits such as Saint Bernard Project (SBP) that vet homeowners in need, to partnering with local project managers with deep construction knowledge and pairing them with a dozen Clay Hunt Fellows as site supervisors and support staff to manage volunteers, materials and finances, with the attitude of “better, stronger, faster” Team Rubicon simply knows how to “get shit done,” says Venables.

Ken Farris, construction manager in Houston, knows firsthand what it’s like to have a home stripped down to its studs after a hurricane. This personally happened to Farris’ home as a result of Hurricane Ike in 2008. “I don’t know what I would have done without having my house redone by someone else,” says Farris. “A lot of people just walk away from their houses and sell them for pennies on a dollar to an investor,” adds Farris. Having over 20-years of construction experience, he is pleased to be able to help homeowners rebuild and get back to a much-needed sense of normalcy. “The quicker it can happen, the better,” says Farris and Team Rubicon is leaving the home “better than it was before the storm.”

The gratitude of the homeowner is immense. Both Venables and Farris get all the hugs inside the homeowners’ refinished home. At the end of the day, the opportunity the Houston Rebuild team provides to its volunteers to help others in their worse possible moments, makes it all worthwhile.

Now, four months into the Rebuild timeline, Team Rubicon is getting ready to roll out the Rebuild capability in other affected areas.

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Interested in volunteering on the Houston Rebuild? [Learn more.](#)