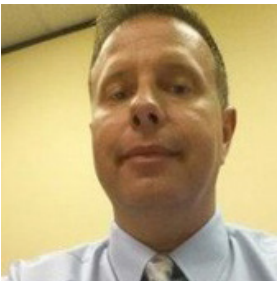


## A Project Recovery Buyout Program Testimonial: *Floyd Foreman*



Floyd Foreman

Close your eyes and just imagine, you are in the process of remodeling your home from the flood damages you sustained during the 2016 storms. This time, you had the intelligence to replace your hardwood floors with tile and travertine. Modernized your kitchen with fresh new appliances and cabinets and did the same with your bathrooms. Now that you have fresh, newly installed and painted drywalls in the living and bedroom areas, it was time to liven up and freshen those areas. The beds are purchased and family has given you antique dining room and bedroom furniture from grandma and great grandma. You are starting to feel the joy that comes with accomplishment, even though you have wiped out all of your savings on your home that sits on  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre and medical bills. You have plans for starting all over.

Don't open your eyes just yet, because you have another BIG surprise headed your way. You are trying to decide what to buy your brother for his birthday on August 30th, 2017. Those thoughts are interrupted by a warning of impending threat the week prior. Someone (or something) named Harvey is on its way to Houston. Would he/it visit you? That is all you can think of as you frantically lift furniture onto cinder blocks and anything else you can find. You are collecting photos and documents that are important for your life and more importantly, those that hold greater importance to your heart and soul. Climbing through a hole in your master closet ceiling isn't very easy to do, but it is a must as you place those life insurance papers, letters, writings, and photos from your father and others you lost years ago. Your high school yearbooks, diplomas from both high school and college, along with all of the awards and accolades you received beginning from kindergarten. While you're at it, you may as well put your Christmas tree and all of your new ornaments, your antique ones, and others filled with memories and meaning up there too. Now grab some clothes and a few things (you can't forget your cologne) you need for a possible few nights while Harvey may pay a visit to your home. The only thing left to do is say a prayer or two. Now, leave.

*“Although nothing could replace all I lost, there is nothing that can replace what I have gained from this great program and the wonderful, caring people that manage it and finally helped me get my life back again.”*

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Harvey, a devastating Cat 4 Hurricane made landfall at approximately 10 pm on August 25th. With indifference, Harvey and its rains became catastrophic and stayed for days, delivering blow upon blow and waters like never



*Floyd Foreman's new home that was purchased through the Harris County Buyout Program, which allows residents who lived in flood-prone areas to find a new house.*

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seen before. Record rainfalls continuing through the 29th and 30th caused disastrous drainage problems as a majority of riverbeds in and around the Harris County and Houston area exceeded record flooding levels. You sit, you wait, most of the time in the dark. Even when Harvey has moved on, you sit and wait for just a few more days as the waters need to recede so you can safely make your way home to find out if “Harvey got me.” Once you are finally able to navigate the streets that are no longer buried in waters, you arrive at your home. The mailbox is gone. You are left with no doubt now...Harvey got me. You park in the street and climb over that once beautiful oak tree that held memories from all the storms past that it was able to survive. The first thing you look for is that small line of dirt and grass that will have remained at the peak of the waters that inundated your home. You find it, nearly 6 feet high. As you open the door, the door moves, just enough so that you can get in to find your new refrigerator, upside down, which was partly to blame for your difficult entry, Everything in your home that could move has been swept to the front of the house. A nice neat line of filth, collected with your belongings, entangled, twisted, mostly destroyed lined the north wall of your home. As you briefly glance through the rubble, you notice your Christmas tree. Wait, that doesn't make sense, it was in the attic, more than 9 feet high. You immediately look up and see that the ceiling has collapsed, and you can see the sky in two different areas. Two trees had crashed through your roof, and everything in your attic is gone. The tears begin. The nights on mom's couch and your brothers' and sister's homes all become your new collective refuge until you can find an investor that will give you enough money for your property so you can start over. You hope for an offer for \$60K or more, but the offers are getting are closer to \$40K. Just as you get ready to give in and take so much less than you ever imagined, your receive a letter from Harris County asking you if you are interested in a “Voluntary Buyout”. You notice one of your neighbors has vacated their home, although they had begun rebuilding. In one phone call to them, you find out that they participated in the buyout program and moved to Huntsville. You immediately turn down the investor offers and sign up for the Harris County Voluntary Buyout Program.

I don't quite remember when the reality of it all really set in, but I can tell you that it hurt. You can open your eyes now...that's when I did. Sometime between signing up for the Harris County Voluntary Buyout Program



and May of 2018, I received a call from James Wade with Harris County Flood Control. He asked me if I could be a little more patient because he had been working with several different entities to develop a special program for those that had been most impacted and whose homes were hopelessly deep within a flood zone. He promised me this program would be MUCH more helpful financially. This program eventually became known to me as “Project Recovery,” and later as the “CDBG Program.” In September of 2018, Harris County invited me to join a group of other Harvey victims for a presentation about this new program. It was this day when my life began to change for the better.



*Floyd Foreman's home sustained damage from Hurricane Harvey in 2017, as well as previous storms.*

After the introduction to the program via a PowerPoint presentation, we were afforded the

opportunity to meet with various people that were introduced to us as the “Project Recovery” personnel. I could immediately feel their warmth and caring as they offered legal assistance to those that needed it, completed intake applications, and committed themselves to assisting me and the others that were called to the meeting and expressed interest in the program.

Patience is not one of my better virtues and I became restless. But, I ultimately heard from someone in November, introducing me to the CSD group that would be assisting me as we moved ahead. That lack of patience that I struggled with made me a horrible customer. I just wanted to pick a house and let them pay for it so I could get out of mom’s house and off of her couch. Therefore, from day 1, I didn’t hear or listen to things like I should have in order to understand the program and its requirements. I ultimately partnered with two different Angels within the CSD group. They are Victoria Peay and Cary Jones. My continuous eagerly jumping up and down, thinking, “Hurry up! Hurry up! Let’s just do it!”, caused these two individuals to have to put forth unmeasurable amounts of energy and patience to explain and re-explain various parts of the program that I had either completely failed to remember or to which I didn’t completely understand because, once more, I just wanted to pick a new house and let them pay for it.

To CSD’s credit, the patience, support, and caring truly reflected in all their actions and ultimately resulted in a beautiful replacement home. Furthermore, the thoughtfulness and kindness of Mr. Jones afforded the program to have accessible equipment selected and installed after the purchase of the home to assist with my disability needs.

My faith in the kindness of people has been restored. Although nothing could replace all I lost, there is nothing that can replace what I have gained from this great program and the wonderful, caring people that manage it and finally helped me get my life back again. Please know that I will forever be grateful for my new home, but my gratitude goes far beyond that tangible award that I gained from CSD and will last much, much longer.