

01 September 2010

Sent via email to: greg.abbott@oag.state.tx.us

Attorney General Greg Abbott
Office of the Attorney General
300 W. 15th Street
Austin, TX 78701

Sent Via U.S. Mail

Cc:
Representative Craig Eiland
2211 The Strand, Suite 201
Galveston, Texas 77550

Re: Galveston public housing

Mr. Attorney General:

We need your help!

The population of the City of Galveston has been declining for 50 years sending a clear message that fewer and fewer people can find a good reason to live in this city. During this same period, 1960-2010, the State of Texas more than doubled its population as Galveston lost 28% of its residents. The recent history and condition of Galveston earned it the distinction of being classified as a "Forgotten City" by a [2007 MIT study](#). Last month, the web site 24/7 Wall Street did a more focused study and included Galveston on its list of ["America's Ten Dead Cities"](#).

The reports of Galveston's death are premature, but the fact that the City needs to be on life support is well established by

the population data, which should make it clear that Galveston's recovery from Hurricane Ike is going to be a long, drawn out, painful, and difficult process. This city needs all the good fortune that it can conjure up for its recovery, and must avoid those things that will stall its progress. The current impasse on public housing has distracted City government from the business of rebuilding the City, and solving its budget crisis.

The residents of Galveston are being told that the City will not receive the recovery funds that have been allotted to it unless it rebuilds the 569 the public housing units that were destroyed by Hurricane Ike. Our interactions with the voters indicate that a large majority do not want any additional public housing while a small but powerful minority does. This minority seems to be motivated by either a far-left ideology, or personal political or financial gain. As the City Council attempts to make a decision on public housing, they are being told that if they don't vote to build more public housing, Galveston will lose other financial aid from the federal government. Galveston is being held hostage by this misinformation campaign!

The latest data shows that about [0.65% of the U.S. population lives in public housing](#), while the City of Galveston is housing about (410 units x 1 person/unit = 410 people) (410 people/48,000 population = 0.85%) 0.85% of its population in senior housing units. However, if the 569 family units are rebuilt, they would house approximately (569 x 2.2 people/unit = 1,252 people) 1,252 additional citizens. This would raise the public housing footprint to about (410 + 1,252 = 1,662 people) (1,662 people/48,000 population = 3.5%) 3.5% of the total population, or more than FIVE TIMES THE NATIONAL AVERAGE! This fragile city simply can not cope with the heavy burden that this additional public housing would place on city services, and the social fabric of the City.

There are two reasons not to believe the claim, which has been conjured up by the minority faction, that the City must build more public housing. First, no other city in the State of Texas has been told that it will lose other federal funding if it does not

build public housing. How could such a requirement be applied only to the City of Galveston, and no other city? Public housing advocates don't have the nerve to try this bluff anywhere else besides our City government!

Second, our [communications with HUD](#), beginning in the Fall of 2009, have confirmed that HUD is placing no requirements on the City of Galveston to build public housing, because they consider this a local decision. If HUD has no such requirement, where is this phantom requirement coming from?

There are also claims that the recent [Conciliation Agreement](#) mandates that the City of Galveston build new public housing units. To the contrary, the Agreement simply states that Galveston must build public housing if it accepts funds earmarked for this purpose. The rejection of these funds would clearly seem to negate the requirement to build.

In short, there is absolutely no proof that the City of Galveston must build public housing in order to receive other federal funds, for its recovery process, but there is a very real danger that the City Council will be pressured to vote against the best interests of the City unless these rumors, misrepresentations, and lies are put to rest by someone who has the authority to do so. It is for this reason that we ask your office to examine these spurious claims and make an official ruling on this matter.

The burden created by the building of more public housing could set the recovery of this City back for many years; a price that we cannot afford.

Best regards,

David Stanowski
President
Galveston Open Government Project, Inc.