

David Stanowski, President of the Galveston Open Government Project

There are four basic facts that should always be kept in mind when discussing Public Housing:

1. NO CITY in this country is required to build and operate Public Housing.
2. It is the CHOICE of city government.
3. MOST cities choose NOT to build and operate Public Housing.
4. They make this choice, because they realize it is a LIABILITY to their city; not an asset.

Those cities that choose to build and operate Public Housing place themselves at a decided DISADVANTAGE to those cities that do not. Public Housing cities tend to drive out portions of their middle class and business community, curtailing healthy population growth.

With the demolition of PH in Texas City, Galveston is the now only city in this county that has chosen to build and operate Public Housing. From 1960-2010, both the State of Texas, and Galveston County more than doubled their populations, while the City of Galveston lost about 19,000 people, or 28% of its residents.

It should be clear that the City of Galveston must start growing again or it could easily become a dead city.

What can be done to generate new growth?

Start by listening to what people are saying about the City.

This Spring, CDM completed a housing market survey of the employees from six major Galveston employers. When asked why

they might be more likely to want to live in Galveston since Hurricane Ike, one of their most frequent answers was “the removal of Public Housing” .

It should be clear from this survey that choosing not to expand Public Housing in this city will help to attract new middle class residents, but choosing to build more Public Housing is likely to drive more of the middle class out of the City.

The people are telling you what they don't want in Galveston. Are you listening?

Now, some will say that the City has no choice but to rebuild the 569 units of Public Housing destroyed by Hurricane Ike, because of the Conciliation Agreement, but they are conveniently ignoring the fact that this so-called Agreement was negotiated without the participation of this city, and it requires the GHA to violate at least four federal laws and regulations, which should make it null and void with respect to the City of Galveston.

These violations can easily be avoided by locating any expansion of Public Housing into other cities in the County, which will also offer better opportunities to the County's Public Housing residents.

In closing, we have to remember that:

- No other city in the County has any public housing
- No other city is being forced to build public housing
- Texas City tore down their public housing, and is not being forced to rebuild it
- And yet Galveston always comes out as the bad guy in this drama!