

GHA Continues to Submit a Flawed Plan

By Chris Toombs and David Stanowski

A detailed examination of the GHA plan reveals why their insistence on building new projects north of Broadway instead of using existing properties throughout the County is still seriously flawed:

1.) This area has a high concentration of poverty.

Data on U.S. Census Bureau website will confirm this fact, and on December 10, 2008 the GHA's Executive Director was quoted in the GCDN saying "The projects, where more than 580 families lived before the storm, concentrate poverty north of Broadway and are vulnerable to flooding again when the next hurricane strikes."

2.) This area has a high concentration of minority residents.

Before Ike, 85% of GHA residents were minorities. This statistic was cited in Texas Appleseed's Administrative Complaint to HUD, and can also be confirmed on the U.S. Census Bureau website.

3.) This area is highly vulnerable to flooding and damage to structures and personal property, which will require much higher building and insurance costs.

This was painfully obvious during Hurricane Ike.

4.) This area has a disproportionate amount of crime.

On January 5, 2010 the GHA's architect for The Oaks IV Project stated before the City's Planning Commission that "The architects designed the original Oaks intentionally to face inward because of the "unsavory characters" that dealt drugs and engaged in other illicit activities in the surrounding neighborhood."

The Police grids defining the area containing and surrounding the four demolished GHA housing projects generated 2,558 case reports from September 1, 2007 thru September 1, 2008. This represents 21.28% of all the case reports in the City. The population of these same grids contained an estimated 2-3% of the city's population. This means that the areas in and around

these four sites had seven times the amount of crime as the City average.

In the "Executive Summary" of the GHA 2008 Plan their Executive Director stated "However, the money available for police services from operations is only around 25% of that provided through the former PHDEP grant and it is insufficient to manage the crime level on and around GHA's public housing. Unfortunately, without a comprehensive policing program, problems that were once dealt with reoccur **as felons return to their previous neighborhoods from prison**. The drug crime causes fear in residents.."

Obviously, the GHA still does not understand that with increased citizen oversight their usual way of doing business is no longer acceptable.

The Galveston Open Government Project continues to advocate the use of a regional solution to the current housing issues. On January 13, we will be presenting our research and proposal, including supporting court cases, to the County Commissioners Court and the City Planning Commission. We have requested permission to present this plan to the City Council, but they have shown no interest in having us do so.

A regional plan might seem more complex to initiate and administer, but regardless of the possible difficulties, the new challenges that a countywide plan may present does not excuse anyone from implementing a plan that complies with the Civil Rights Act and Fair Housing laws.