

A New Vision for Galveston

Galveston's Comprehensive Plan clearly states: "Expand housing choice for low-moderate income households in a manner which strengthens neighborhoods, limits reliance on public and subsidized housing, and reduces concentrations of poverty." That was approved by the City Council in 2001, and is still in effect today.

The Comprehensive Plan is the product of citizen input. It is the roadmap against which all city action is decided upon and measured. Therefore, any housing plan for low-moderate income needs to comply with the Comprehensive Plan.

By all reports, Galveston has 7,000+ vacant and abandoned homes. They are spread throughout our already mixed income, mixed use, ethnically diverse, racially integrated, naturally occurring old urban neighborhoods. It only makes sense that any new housing plan would seek to positively address the oversupply of housing we already have. The challenge is how to come together with an innovative revitalization plan that enhances life for ALL stakeholders in our city in doing so.

With 55% of all federal funds coming to our city earmarked for low/moderate income housing, we have a unique opportunity to do just that.

- Create a Revitalization Department under the city, to work in concert with Code Enforcement, Legal, and Grants and Housing.
- Dissolve the Galveston Housing Authority with a majority vote of council.
- Bring that function and accompanying funds under the Revitalization Department.
- Use the funds to purchase and rehab abandoned homes in our existing neighborhoods.
- Sell the homes at a discount to qualifying persons, who agree to owner occupy for 3 years.
- Retain a lien on the homes for the amount of the discount, to be repaid by owner to the city upon sale.
- Reinvest the money from the sales of rehabbed homes into qualifying infrastructure repairs in those neighborhoods, addressing streets, sidewalks, and drainage.
- Sell the GHA land, making it available for highest and best use, and returning it to the tax rolls.

This program benefits the community as a whole. While expanding housing choices for low/moderate income, we revitalize our core neighborhoods and eliminates blight. Home ownership is increased, with property kept on the tax rolls. Our existing housing stock is preserved and its reuse is the ultimate in green building practices. We create jobs for local contractors and suppliers. With the over-supply of housing reduced, property values will stabilize. Fewer vacant homes ease pressure on police and fire, improving safety. We pave the way for return to neighborhood schools, reducing bussing. And we returns large tracts of land to

the tax rolls, for more appropriate uses by the port, industry, and UTMB.

Galveston can be a showcase of urban revitalization. Positive media exposure, encouraging private investment can ultimately jumpstart our economy.

By taking these logical, measured, and strategic steps Galveston can finally have an opportunity to live up to it's full potential and become the city that ALL citizens, regardless of income, can be proud of. This is a win-win housing solution to benefit all.

Jul Kamen, concerned citizen of Galveston