

Date: 24 September 2014

To: Galveston City Council

Re: Poverty and Crime

Concentrating Poverty Creates More Crime:

The principle is fairly simple. Concentrating poverty creates more crime than if the same amount of poverty was spread out and diffused. This is true on each level where it can be measured: by city, by neighborhood, or by housing project. **The more concentrated it is on each level, the more crime can be expected.**

It is also true whether a development is managed by private owners or a housing authority. Private owners may be better than housing authorities at building and/or managing high-poverty projects, which will reduce the crime, but when there is a high concentration of poverty, the resulting crime rate is never going to approach the crime rate in a low-poverty development, no matter who builds and manages it!

Sandpiper Cove:

Heber Taylor astutely pointed out in his 21 September editorial, [A Housing Problem that could be Solved](#), that Sandpiper Cove concentrates 192 impoverished families in this project. Therefore, it is no surprise that **this concentration of poverty created 4,106 calls for service in 2010 and 3,122 calls for service in 2011, greatly taxing the resources of the Galveston Police Department.** Heber is right on point when he says that the City can solve a portion of its concentrated-poverty problem by simply convincing the City Council to shut down Sandpiper Cove. Of course, shutting down Sandpiper Cove would also solve many of the other problems created by concentrated poverty.

However, **it is erroneous to believe that the problem at Sandpiper Cove, that caused all of the crime, was/is "private**

ownership and management" and the use of a federal program that "is no longer in favor".

When Stanley Lowe made those claims, he was trying to sell the narrative that the crime in the City was unfairly blamed on the GHA's housing projects.

Private ownership and management, and the use of project-based vouchers, did not cause the crime at Sandpiper Cove; the CONCENTRATION OF POVERTY DID! We must also not forget that the Cedar Terrace and Magnolia Homes rebuilds will have "private ownership and management" and they will use project-based vouchers along with public housing units.

If Heber believes that Sandpiper Cove creates an enormous amount of crime because of its private ownership and management as well as the use of project-based vouchers, then we will let him explain his support for Cedar Terrace and Magnolia Homes, because they will also employ private ownership and management as well as the use of project-based vouchers?

Those "mixed-income" projects call for far too many public housing units and project-based vouchers (51%), Cedar Terrace is in a neighborhood that now has 66% poverty (2012 ACS), and they are in a city with over 20% poverty. In short, they concentrate poverty at every level, so they should generate crime at rates that will rival Sandpiper Cove.

Public Housing and Crime:

Mr. Lowe certainly was aware of the fact that when the GHA housing projects were in operation, they created an amount of crime on par with Sandpiper Cove.

"Public housing developments have a reputation as high crime areas, and numerous studies have proven this reputation to be well deserved. Rates of violent crime are generally higher in public housing sites than at other inner-city locations." "This

study clearly demonstrates that drug and violent offenses are severe problems in housing developments."

Dunworth, Terence, and Aaron J. Saiger, [Drugs and Crime in Public Housing: A Three-City Analysis](#), Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1994 (NCJ 145329).

The GHA and Crime:

In 2009, the GOP requested data from the Galveston Police Department, so we could analyze the use of police resources and the crime rates at Cedar Terrace, Palm Terrace, Magnolia Homes, and Oleander Homes **from 01 September 2007 to 01 September 2008, i.e. the year before Hurricane Ike**. We did not include Sandpiper Cove in the study, because it is not a GHA owned and operated project.

The seven police grids that were used do not produce precise data, because they include some areas outside of the project grounds; but it was the best measurement available.

Calls for Service:

"Calls for service" count any citizen contact with the police, which include both activities that do not count as crimes, and everything that is logged in as a crime.

Cedar Terrace, police grids 43 and 48, **1,425 calls for service**
Palm Terrace, police grid 60, **2,501 calls for service**
Magnolia Homes, police grids 15 and 17, **1,061 calls for service**
Oleander Homes, police grids 74 and 75, **4,400 calls for service**

This shows a total of **9,387 calls for service**, in police grids 43, 48, 60, 15, 17, 74, and 75 during the period in question.

There were **101,747 calls for service**, in the entire City of Galveston, during the period in question.

Therefore, 9.23% of all calls for service in the City of Galveston were for the areas containing and surrounding the four Housing Projects.

If there was an average of 3 people per public housing unit, and there were 569 units, there were approximately 1,707 people living in these four projects between 01 September 2007 and 01 September 2008. The total population of the City was approximately 57,247.

This means that $1,707 / 57,247 = 2.98\%$ of the City's population generated 9.23% of the calls for service!

THREE TIMES MORE than should be expected!

Case Reports:

"Case reports" count everything logged in as a crime, and, therefore, they are much more serious than "calls for service".

Cedar Terrace, police grids 43 and 48, 453 case reports

Palm Terrace, police grid 60, 569 case reports

Magnolia Homes, police grids 15 and 17, 270 case reports

Oleander Homes, police grids 74 and 75, 1,266 case reports

This shows a total of 2,558 case reports, in police grids 43, 48, 60, 15, 17, 74, and 75, during the period in question.

There were 12,018 case reports, in the entire City of Galveston, during the period in question.

Therefore, 21.28% of all case reports in the City of Galveston were for the areas containing and surrounding the four Housing Projects.

This means that 2.98% of the City's population generated 21.28% of the case reports!

SEVEN TIMES MORE than should be expected!

Clearly, the concentrated poverty in both privately owned and operated projects and housing authority owned and operated projects creates a disproportionate demand for police resources and a disproportionate amount of crime.

The City Council needs to get used to the fact that areas of concentrated poverty always consume far more resources than should be the case based on the number of people living there.

Before and After:

The crime at Cedar Terrace, Palm Terrace, Magnolia Homes, and Oleander Homes was a serious problem when they were in operation, but what does the crime rate look like on those same police grids with them out of operation? We don't have that data, yet, so we will have to be satisfied with citywide crime data pre and post Ike.

Between **2003 and 2007**, the average crime rate in the City was **526**. From **2009 to 2012**, the average crime rate in the City was **420**. (2008 was removed, because it was the year that was both pre and post Ike) The average nationwide crime rate between 2003 and 2012 was 293, putting this city far above the national average!

(See: <http://www.city-data.com/city/Galveston-Texas.html>)

It is interesting to note that when Oleander Homes, Palm Terrace, Cedar Terrace and Magnolia Homes were in operation (**2003 to 2007**) the City's poverty level was **22.5%** and the crime rate was **526**. Between **2009 and 2012**, these reservations of concentrated poverty were shut down, but **the City's poverty level actually rose to 24.7%**, **HOWEVER, the CRIME RATE DROPPED to 420!!**

The data seem to suggest that even without a reduction in the City's poverty level, **the de-concentration of poverty within the City reduced the crime rate 20%**! In other words, without the high concentration of poverty in the four large housing projects, even when a slightly higher amount of poverty was dispersed throughout the City, the crime rate still fell dramatically!

However, since the GHA is in the process of re-concentrating poverty, again, at Cedar Terrace and Magnolia Homes, we can expect the crime rate to rise.

Chicago and Atlanta:

The Chicago and Atlanta housing authorities saw large reductions in crime when they tore down housing projects and dispersed the impoverished residents throughout their cities, **confirming that the concentrated poverty in these projects created a great deal of crime.**

"In the Chicago neighborhoods where public housing was demolished, violent crime decreased more than 60 percent, property crime declined 49 percent, and gun crime declined 70 percent between 2000 and 2008. In Atlanta, violent crime declined 13 percent and property crime declined 9 percent between 2002 and 2009 in neighborhoods with public housing demolition (figure 1)." [Public Housing Transformation and Crime Making the Case for Responsible Relocation](#)

Additional GPD Resources:

The Galveston Police Department could certainly make the case that **it needs to station officers permanently at each location that has a large concentration of poverty** to keep the crime rate under control. If GPD is going to be called to these locations several times a day, anyway, why should they ever leave? **One patrol car and two officers would seem to be a reasonable place to start.** It's likely that there would be many occasions when the permanent patrol would still have to call for backup, when they needed more help, which would tie up even more GPD resources on these high-poverty projects.

With Sandpiper Cove, Cedar Terrace and Magnolia Homes there would be a need for **6 officers and 3 cars to provide permanent perimeter patrols.** However, even with dedicated police resources 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, at locations of concentrated poverty, the crime rate in these locations will NEVER approach that of a low-poverty neighborhood!

How can we calculate the GPD resources needed to patrol and monitor the scattered sites? There are many more units, but they are less concentrated, so maybe the city could get by with just another 6 officers and 3 patrol cars for the scattered sites.

That would be a total of 12 officers and 6 patrol cars to police the returning public housing, but that doesn't count security cameras and other equipment that may be needed.

GHA Knows that they have a Crime Problem:

The fact that the GHA owned and operated housing projects were a crime problem should come as no surprise to anyone, especially the GHA, and Stanley Lowe. [The Executive Summary of their 2008 Plan](#) (See Page 7) stated: *"The struggle to maintain crime-free properties in Galveston requires constant vigilance. GHA has used operating funds for police services over baseline because the use of Capital Funds for physical improvements is crucial to its ability to maintain its properties. 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, high turnover and collection loss, property damage, a high volume of trash on the grounds and management turnover."*

Mixed-Income and Crime:

The GHA may try to tell you that the City is not going to need all of the new police resources mentioned above to control the crime that will be created by the new concentrations of poverty that they will be building, because they will be building "real" mixed-income. Our favorite comment on mixed-income and crime comes from GHA consultant, Georgia State University, when they said *"Public housing has long been associated with crime. One of the arguments against rebuilding is that it will bring crime back into the city. In our analysis of crime and traditional project-based public housing in Atlanta, we have found something rather intriguing. Specifically that crime, both non-violent and violent, is actually more pronounced in the new HOPE VI mixed income redevelopments than in the traditional public housing. Much of this has to do with crimes of*

opportunity (there will be more opportunity in the mixed income developments)."

Your Choice:

Councilmembers, now that you understand the dominant role that concentrated poverty plays in public policy of this city, hopefully, you can clearly see the choices that you have before you. **You simply must seize every opportunity to reduce the concentration of poverty in the City, or the City will pay dearly for the missed opportunities by being forced to dedicate still more City resources to deal with the consequences.**

In other words, either shutdown Sandpiper Cove, or hire additional officers to set up a permanent patrol around it! The problems at Sandpiper Cove are your responsibility; not the GHA's.

Nothing good ever comes from concentrating poverty!

David Stanowski
President
Galveston Open Government Project, Inc.