

Date: 29 September 2014

To: Galveston City Council

Re: Poverty and Infrastructure

How does a city maintain, upgrade and build new infrastructure without middle-class population growth?:

It doesn't.

Competition for Limited Funds:

In a city with a high poverty level, the highest priority for tax dollars will normally be public safety; especially police. The unease created by a high crime rate hangs over the city as a constant reminder that the protection provided by the police must be budgeted before the streets are paved or the sewers are upgraded. In addition, the amount of police resources needed are far in excess of those necessary in a low-poverty city.

A recent study found that impoverished students require about 27% more tax money to educate than their middle class counterparts. This means that an outsized share of overall city tax revenues must also go to the schools before sidewalks and curbs are paved, upgraded or built.

A common occurrence in declining cities is the use of civilian government employment as a "jobs program". Salaries, raises and benefits paid to unneeded civilian employees becomes a higher priority than the city's infrastructure. The City Council continues the jobs program at the expense of the general welfare of the taxpayers, and they ignore the need to consider outsourcing many functions and services, because that would dramatically shrink the number of jobs that they control.

"One of the great tragedies of economic decline is that public institutions become increasingly large employers as employment falls away. So, for example, the importance of getting control of the schools is not to improve education for the kids, it's in order to get a share of the spoils of the jobs. Desperation always produces a short-term perspective that emphasizes

survival over purpose. Public institutions in very poor cities rapidly decay because their ostensible purpose usually gets subordinated to the purpose of providing some of the only decent paying jobs around. Political fights are generally about control of those decently paying jobs."

Harry Spence of Chelsea, Massachusetts:

It's is easy to delay and defer infrastructure needs until it becomes impossible to catch up. **Accepting more concentrated poverty in exchange for promises of infrastructure money is a bad bargain and an immoral act.**

How does a city achieve middle-class population growth without maintaining, upgrading and building new infrastructure?:

It doesn't.

It is a vicious circle!

It is becoming more and more difficult to retain the current middle class population with the present decaying infrastructure. Decaying public infrastructure encourages private-sector blight. Why should a home owner repair and paint their house when they have no sidewalk, broken curbs and potholed streets in front of their home?

David Stanowski
President
Galveston Open Government Project, Inc.