

The People of Galveston Speak Out

Dear Mayor and City Council,

During your long deliberations do you ever consider your middle class residents? It certainly doesn't seem so, in fact it is as if you take us for granted! I am incensed over the antics of GHA. Is public housing a stepping stone, a hand up, a hand out, or an end result? How can GHA keep hiring new employees when companies, government agencies and organizations are cutting back? Why does GHA have the authority to operate unchecked and why they are applauded for doing this?

I don't understand how GHA can run advertisements attracting "clients" to Galveston by claiming they are under the direction of HUD and have no control. GHA is building an empire unchecked. They operate in their own independent bubble with their own rules and, as recent meetings have shown, with little concern for public opinion. Is there no one strong enough to stop them or at least question their motives? I can't imagine what Galveston will look like in 10 years, but then I will have relocated to a city that welcomes hard work, community involvement and entrepreneurship.

Sincerely,

Tom Schwenk, Very concerned citizen

Dear Mayor and City Council,

Providing a government subsidized lifestyle for an ever expanding colony of dependent persons on a barrier island is an irresponsible and unsustainable plan. If allowed to continue, it WILL come at the expense of an already shrinking middle class which you so often give lip-service in trying to attract. The same middle class, who support local businesses, provide jobs, serve on boards, volunteer, and CONTRIBUTE to the well-being of this city. It WILL come at the

expense of any new business and entrepreneurship, which will have no reason to locate here. The resilient can-do attitude of the citizens, on which this city was founded, will wither and die. It will be replaced by a population on government life-support, who has no reason or incentive to become anything else. Subsidized living is a drug, and GHA is not providing any treatment (i.e. job training requirements in return for housing, etc.) to combat that addiction. They should gauge their success by how many people they get OFF of public housing, not how many they attract TO it.

GHA is a freight train out of control, answerable to no one but HUD. They took on DHAP for ALL of Galveston County, which the other Galveston county housing authorities voluntarily declined. The 6,500 people on DHAP are countywide, but have been "adopted" by GHA. For what purpose? Perhaps because as an Entitlement City, we need a population of 50,000 to maintain that status? Adding Katrina/Rita victims could also help those numbers, which they are now actively soliciting. And paying 120% for Section 8 rentals encourages more investors to buy up damaged properties and turn them over to Section 8, making an additional guaranteed 20% on their investments, and undermining home ownership and stable neighborhoods (the number one objective of our Comprehensive Plan???) in one fell swoop. Now GHA is apparently applying for a \$40M grant to buy up 5 city blocks for more subsidized govt. housing. This does not require city council's approval, or even knowledge of. This is all information that the citizens need to know.

As our city leaders, we expect you to investigate these issues. What GHA is doing now will affect our city for decades to come. For my mind, and many others, the PRICE of remaining an Entitlement City comes at far too high a cost.

We need to act NOW.

Jul Kamen, concerned citizen

As a citizen of Galveston I am concerned that GHA (Galveston Housing Authority) is planning to over build the low/medium housing projects. This city has lost 20% of its population and there are now 9000 empty properties on our island. To build more units than are needed would put our city's economy in a downward spiral.

It seems to me the correct solutions to our problem would be to get a list of people that were housed here before Ike and build for only those that wish to return. (Some are now living in San Antonio and Austin and have no desire to return to Galveston.)

Please help us keep the economy healthy by building only the amount of housing that is needed. (There was an ad in the Galveston Daily New inviting people from Rita and Katrina to apply that is just unfair to the citizen of Galveston.)

Thanks you and please investigate this situation before agreeing to hand out more of the tax payer's money than is needed to solve the housing problem for low/medium housing on Galveston Island.

Joan Mertens

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
961 Pickle Federal Building
300 East 8th Street
Austin, TX 78701

Dear Senator Hutchison,

As a resident of Galveston, Texas, I am writing to express my concern about the plans to rebuild all of the public housing in Galveston, which was destroyed by Hurricane Ike. For decades, the public housing projects were riddled with crime and drugs, creating a blight on 25% of the footprint of our city. Generations of families were raised in these public housing units, which indicates to me that there was no incentive for these people to work. Please do not

authorize the rebuilding of these units in ghetto-ized clusters, as it drives away potential residents, businesses and tourists.

I do support public housing for deserving families and individuals, but I believe that it should be spread throughout the city. I strongly urge you to reconsider the existing plans that are proposed by Galveston Housing Authority Executive Director Harish Krishnarao and GHS Board Member Ray Lewis, who I believe are currently in Washington D.C., probably to lobby for their plan. Please insist that our Federal tax money be spent wisely.

Best Regards,
Danny Pickett