

08 February 2010

Sent via certified mail RRR

Sent via email to: Secretary.Donovan@hud.gov

The Honorable Shaun Donovan
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

Cc: See below

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Re: We need your help!

About 2% of the U.S. population is currently living in public housing or is using a housing authority voucher, but if the Galveston Housing Authority rebuilds the 569 public housing units lost due to Hurricane Ike, approximately 11% of Galveston's population will be living in public housing, or using a housing authority voucher; assuming a population of 45,000. [\(Exhibit 1\)](#) In other words, the GHA's rebuilding plan will result in five times more housing units, dependent on public assistance, than the national average.

In addition, before Hurricane Ike, the City of Galveston contained 88% of all the public housing units, and 86% of all the Section 8 properties in Galveston County, even though the City only represented 20% of the County's population. [\(Exhibit 2\)](#) Finally, 42% of the people belonging to minority groups, in the County, lived in the City of Galveston. [\(Exhibit 3\)](#) With the reduced

population, due to the Storm, and the elimination of public housing units in Texas City, the City of Galveston will likely have 100% of all the public housing units, and an increased percentage of all the Section 8 units, in the County, if the Galveston Housing Authority rebuilding plan is implemented. This concentration of housing units, dependent on public assistance, goes far beyond what the City can absorb and support, and contributes to the high degree of segregation within the County.

The population of the State of Texas increased 154% between 1960 and 2008, while Galveston's population declined 15%; from 67,175 to 57,086! These trends also appear to confirm the fact that Galveston has far fewer opportunities than the typical city in one of the country's fastest growing states. If this city had grown at the same rate as the State, the population would now stand at 170,586, but it's currently estimated to be 45,000; less than a third of that amount. Many of the White middle class have moved to other cities for this reason, while minorities were left behind, and trapped in the City, because they did not have the resources to identify better opportunities, and relocate.

From 01 September 2007 to 01 September 2008, the year before the Hurricane, 21% of all the crimes in Galveston, as defined by GPD case reports, were reported in the areas containing and surrounding the four family housing developments. Since these same areas represented approximately 2.5-3.0% of the City's total population, the crime rate, and city services needed to deal with it, in these areas, was about seven times the average for the City. (Exhibit 4) GHA rules do not allow people who have committed crimes to reside at their properties, but somehow they do anyway. This problem is hardly new at GHA properties as the 2001 Houston Press article "Gangstas in Paradise" made abundantly clear.

<http://www.houstonpress.com/2001-12-06/news/gangstas-in-paradise/>

This crime data also demonstrates the frustration that the residents of these public housing developments must have had with their former living arrangements.

Rebuilding public housing in the only city within Galveston County trapped in a long-term state of decline, and just beginning a multi-year recovery from a hurricane, also forces its tenants to live in the city with the lowest median household income, the highest crime rate, and one of the lowest-rated school systems in the County. The obstacles that these conditions present to people at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder makes it almost impossible for them to escape from a life of poverty. ([Exhibit 5](#))

These data paint a very clear picture of a countywide growth and migration pattern that has created a concentration of low-income minorities in the City of Galveston. The only reasonable way to alter this undesirable and counterproductive demographic pattern is to establish a countywide housing authority that can offer the former residents of Galveston's family housing developments the opportunity to relocate to more affluent areas of the County that are experiencing healthy growth, and have a more ideal demographic profile, which will give them a much better chance to escape from poverty.

However, in their rush to merely rebuild, rather than reconsider and reconfigure a whole new strategy, the GHA and the City of Galveston are ignoring the latest HUD rules, regulations, and guidelines, as well as academic studies and judicial rulings regarding the optimum way to operate public housing. By simply reducing the density of public housing at the four former sites, they believe that this token gesture absolves them from following the letter of the law, and dramatically reducing the density of public housing in this City.

Moving past such basic problems as the fact that the GHA rebuilding plan will create excess housing supply, in a city with thousands of vacant housing units, and rebuild public housing in a flood plain, when much better and less expensive locations are

available; the most serious violation created by their plan is the concentration of low-income minority residents in areas that are already racially segregated and have a high incidence of poverty.

The rule of law simply does not exist when it comes to public housing in Galveston, Texas; raw political power is dictating policy, which is why we need your help.

The Galveston Open Government Project (GOGP) has attempted to persuade the GHA of the need to halt any building plans until our local government entities can agree on a way to move to a countywide or regional approach, for site location, in order to avoid illegally segregating public housing residents; but they have absolutely no interest in doing so. We have even informed them that their actions create personal liability for themselves, because what they are proposing is a Civil Rights violation under USC Title 42, Section 1983, should past, present, or future tenants decide to sue them; but they responded by accelerating their efforts to gain City Council approval for their rebuilding plan. (Exhibit 6)

The GOGP appealed directly to the Galveston City Council, and especially the Mayor, who appoints all of the GHA Commissioners; and neither the Mayor, nor the Council would even put the issue on the agenda for discussion. (Exhibit 7) The Council's refusal to provide a forum to fully debate this issue flies in the face of the comments to Governor Rick Perry from Assistant Secretary Mercedes Marquez, in her letter dated 10 November 2009, that, *"the State has not provided citizens with public notice and the opportunity to comment on the COGs (Councils of Governments) methods of distribution to units of general local government."* And the State must *"provide for reasonable public notice, appraisal, examination and comment on the activities proposed for the use of the CDBG disaster recovery grant funds."*(Exhibit 8)

County Judge Jim Yarbrough was much more accommodating, because he invited us to present our plan, and explain the legal necessity of moving to a countywide housing authority to the

County Commissioners. The Judge and the County Commissioners seemed receptive to the idea, and the Judge asked us to keep him informed, but we don't believe that they want to be put in the position to initiate such a change without a clear signal from your office.

On 01 February, we met with Dr. Pringle, and Dan Rodriguez at the HUD Houston Field Office. They were also receptive and supportive of the idea of moving to a countywide housing authority, but said all that they could do was to forward our research and recommendations to the Regional Office, and to your office, for guidance.

Many people have looked at our research and said that all we have to do is hire a lawyer and sue HUD, and the GHA, and we will surely win the case. The facts and circumstances in the City of Galveston and Galveston County are very similar to those in Baltimore and Baltimore County that gave rise to the ACLU and NAACP sponsored lawsuit, *Thompson v. HUD*; that was decided against HUD. ([Exhibit 9](#))

While we agree with this assessment; it is simply not right for the GOP, or any other public-interest group, to be forced to spend the time and money to file suit against a federal agency, to convince a court to order the agency to enforce its own rules, and abide by the previous rulings set forth in *Thompson*. There certainly don't seem to be any new facts to be argued in the current situation, and the guidance from *Thompson* is well settled, so why should HUD remain passive and invite another 10-year-long lawsuit?

Our initial research into the relationship between HUD and local housing authorities found many references to the fact that HUD likes to grant local authorities broad autonomy. Generally, this seems like a good policy, but it should be remembered that local housing authorities are administering a federal program that must abide by federal rules, regulations, and statutes.

When a local housing authority goes rogue, it is HUD's responsibility to step in and rectify the situation. If HUD officials respond by saying that they "don't want to meddle in local issues", the federal rules that housing authorities MUST follow become meaningless!

We realize that the official delegation from the City of Galveston is telling a much different story when they go to Washington, and meet with people from your office.

For example, on 06 January 2010, Mayor Lyda Ann Thomas made a presentation to you entitled "[Galveston, Texas: Hurricane Ike Recovery: A Success Story in the Making](#)". Slide number 13 states,

"WE ARE IN COMPLIANCE WITH ALL HUD REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS." (Exhibit 10)

Where are the documents to support this claim? [\(Exhibit 11\)](#) The GOP looks forward to meeting with federal investigators to show them the numerous examples of non compliance that we have already found. There are bound to be many more, yet to be discovered.

The political reality is that the entrenched interests in this City want public housing rebuilt, as it was before, simply to keep the money flowing from Washington, for their own financial benefit, and to maintain a minority seat on City Council. [\(Exhibit 12\)](#) They are willing to ignore the illegal segregation and concentration of poverty that must be re-established to make this happen, so we must rely on HUD, and the Justice Department, to resist the political pressure from these people, and enforce the law.

Mr. Secretary, we think that this matter could be settled very easily and quickly if you would send someone from your office to Galveston who has the authority to freeze all federal funding to the GHA, and order the City of Galveston, and the GHA, to work with Galveston County to develop a countywide housing

authority that will avoid re-creating illegal segregation. Without such an order, it is clear that they are simply not going to do it!

We have also begun the process of contacting members of our Congressional delegation and asking them to carry our message to the White House so that the President is aware of what is happening on his watch.

We will be drafting Administrative Complaints, outlining why HUD should reject GHA's rebuilding plan, in more detail, but there is a major push to get their plan funded quickly in the belief that once that's done, their transgressions will be ignored by federal officials. That is the reason that we have written this short letter asking for your immediate help.

Respectfully,

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Appendix - Civil Rights Issues in Galveston, Texas

Texas Appleseed made the allegation that public housing was under fire in this City because the people of Galveston are racists. Nothing could be further from the truth! The people of this city are merely overwhelmed by the frustration of having been forced to shoulder the burden of the vast majority of the entire County's public housing in our poor and declining city that is ill equipped to handle this task. For decades, the former family housing developments had spread blight to the surrounding neighborhoods, generated a disproportionate amount of crime, created overwhelming socio-economic problems, and did not contribute to the local tax base.

When they were destroyed by Hurricane Ike, the people of this city had hope that there would surely be some kind of new vision that would relieve them of this burden. Wasn't it someone else's turn to take on at least some of this responsibility? However, to their horror, they were told of the grand plans to rebuild the four destroyed developments, IN GALVESTON, AND that the GHA wanted to build another 1,500 housing units in "mixed income developments" making it the "largest developer on the Island". This overreaching into empire building was fully supported by the Mayor, in a 15 September 2009 newspaper article,

"Before the storm, the housing authority took care of islanders who were customers of the housing authority, Mayor Lyda Ann Thomas said.

But Ike changed the housing authority just as much as it changed the island, she said.

Now the agency must become a partner with the city to build houses for everyone who lives on the island, she said."
(Exhibit 13)

The meetings that the GHA held to fulfill the minimum requirements for public notice and comment never offered opponents of their rebuilding plans any opportunity to present

alternative visions or solutions. Presentations were made showing what they were going to do, like it or not; and testimonials were carefully orchestrated with the intent of stifling debate. If anyone even tried to object and insert another point of view, voices occasionally were raised which the media sometimes shamefully used to exploit and sensationalize the controversy by characterizing the two sides as dividing “primarily along racial lines” .

The truth is that working class and middle class residents of all races were very unhappy with how the GHA ran public housing in this city before Hurricane Ike, and are desperate for a new vision for public housing, regardless of the race of the public housing tenants. The people want a public housing plan that only expects the City of Galveston to carry its fair share of the load.

When federal officials arrive, and begin their investigation, they will quickly see that the problem in this city is not the people; it is elements of City government as well as some of the so-called community leaders who have found it to their financial and political advantage to maintain the worst possible approach to public housing. This has created a poisonous atmosphere that is bad for everyone, but has allowed this controversy to be exploited by these entrenched interests in an attempt to keep the existing system intact.

Many of the problems with public housing in this city could have been greatly mitigated if the GHA had simply managed its properties according to its own rules, and the regulations set forth by HUD. Their failure to do so, and the failure of the City Council to provide the needed oversight, should not be used to vilify the people of this city.

The only reasonable solution to the Civil Rights problem that City government has created is to establish a countywide housing authority that can offer the former residents of Galveston family housing developments the opportunity to relocate to more affluent areas of the County with lower crime rates, higher

median household incomes, better schools, and lower concentrations of minorities.

The requirement to adopt this approach is found in many places, but the four primary sources are set forth below:

1.) The HUD "Fair Housing Planning Guide", March 1996.

On page 29 it states,

"Undertake Metrowide/Regional FHP

An affirmative, metrowide/regional approach to the HUD-assisted family housing programs is encouraged for States and a consortia of local governments (to include State-funded and Entitlement jurisdictions) in metropolitan areas.

Through metrowide/regional FHP, jurisdictions can:

Overcome spatial separation and segregation by making all assisted housing available in the metropolitan area a resource to be used through establishment of a consolidated waiting list for assisted housing which overcomes jurisdictional and artificial program delivery barriers.

Affirmatively further fair housing throughout the metropolitan area, thereby integrating waiting lists, broadening the housing choices available to all those eligible for assisted housing, and encouraging applicants to consider racially non-impacted locations (an area where the racial or ethnic group is less than 30%) and participation in programs typically avoided.

Make public housing a path to social and economic mobility, rather than housing of last resort by targeting selected developments for modernization and for other improvements and facilities to make them attractive to current residents and to suburban residents; this also counterbalances concerns that only suburban housing opportunities are being offered.

Secure the cooperation of other important actors whose impact upon fair housing is substantial, including jobs, schools, transportation, and social services (e.g., private providers using HUD-assisted and HUD-insured programs, important industries in the area who can provide job opportunities, and Government and not-for-profit agencies that provide social services).

Serve as a model approach to other situations where housing within a metropolitan area is segregated by jurisdiction and by program.

*Break down the statistically shown racial disparity between HUD's public housing program and its Section 8 Existing Housing program. Through metrowide/regional FHP jurisdictions can encourage minorities to consider assisted programs other than public housing, encourage non-minorities to consider public housing opportunities that arise sooner than Section 8 units, and **encourage all to consider desegregating moves** within assisted and insured programs, whether public, not-for-profit, State/local or privately provided, by establishing a one-stop, metropolitan area-wide housing assistance, marketing, information, counseling, and referral center.*

***Discourage discrimination** in all programs by encouraging all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, disability, familial status, or national origin to consider all housing options.*

*Metrowide/regional FHP includes an analysis that identifies both State and Entitlement **jurisdictional and regional impediments to fair housing choice and the appropriate actions to remove them.***

A key aspect of metrowide/regional FHP is the creation of a centralized and consolidated applicant database for all assisted housing programs operating in the metropolitan/regional area which can be metro/regionally administered."

Please note that this March 1996 HUD document says, "An affirmative, metrowide/regional approach to the HUD-assisted family housing programs is encouraged.." It doesn't say it is required, at this point in time, but subsequent events have made it mandatory.

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/images/fhpg.pdf>

2.) The 1997 Consent Decree from the lawsuit against the GHA.

In 1995, residents of GHA's family housing developments sued the GHA, the City of Galveston, and HUD alleging that,

"...via various actions and failures to act over the course of more than 50 years, subjected the plaintiff class to racial segregation - or in the case of applicants - the immediate prospect of racial segregation - in public housing and thereafter took insufficient steps to remedy such segregation..."

<http://galvestonogp.org/GHA/GHAConsentDecree.pdf>

The resulting 12 December 1997 Consent Decree offered the remedy of de-concentrating public housing off of existing footprints, to a limited degree, and ordered that some units must be placed in "majority-White areas" as defined by the Census Block Groups. It is our opinion that the plaintiffs simply failed to argue, and the court failed to see the need to de-concentrate on a much wider basis throughout the County as the HUD "Fair Housing Planning Guide" was already encouraging local housing authorities to do. This is the reason that we are forced to revisit this same issue again, today; the Consent Decree did not go nearly far enough to actually bring about de-segregation!

3.) Thompson v. HUD 1995-2005.

"The ACLU of Maryland filed the lawsuit in 1995 on behalf of a class of approximately 14,000 African American tenants, former tenants, and prospective tenants of Baltimore City public housing developments. Plaintiffs alleged that HUD denied

Baltimore's African American public housing residents opportunities to locate throughout the region and instead concentrated them in predominantly minority areas within the city limits in violation of the Fair Housing Act."

"The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) has joined the ACLU of Maryland as co-counsel in Thompson v. HUD. They are representing African Americans in a Baltimore case with far-reaching implications about the concentration of Blacks in public housing in urban centers across America."

"In January 2005, the District Court found HUD liable for failing to take affirmative steps to implement an effective regional strategy for desegregation and poverty de-concentration in Baltimore. The court found that HUD's programs "failed to achieve significant desegregation in Baltimore City." As Judge Marvin J. Garbis explained, "Baltimore City should not be viewed as an island reservation for use as a container for all of the poor of a contiguous region.""

<http://www.naacpldf.org/content.aspx?article=591>

The facts and circumstances in the City of Galveston and Galveston County are very similar to those in Baltimore and Baltimore County that gave rise to Thompson v. HUD. This case is what changed HUD's policy of "encouraging" a regional approach to public housing to a court-ordered "requirement" to adopt this approach.

<http://www.galvestonogp.org/GHA/ThompsonvHUD.pdf>

<http://www.prrac.org/pdf/ThompsonOutline.pdf>

<http://www.prrac.org/pdf/ThompsonAnalysis.pdf>

4.) [U.S. v. Westchester County, New York; 10 August 2009.](#)

This case is even more recent than Thompson, and cites a county for having the knowledge of impediments to members of racial minority groups to find housing outside of areas of existing concentrations of racial minorities, and doing little to rectify the

situation. In addition, County officials routinely signed documents stating that they were "affirmatively furthering fair housing" when they knew that they did not meet the standard; which is a False Claim.

Galveston County is in a somewhat different position than Westchester County in that Galveston County has no history of hands on management of housing authorities, having delegated that function to the Galveston Housing Authority and the Texas City Housing Authority. However, the law seems clear that Galveston County has the ultimate responsibility for the actions and non actions of its sub recipients, and therefore, has also likely made False Claims, because it relied on the assurances of the GHA and the City of Galveston that they were in compliance.

It should also be noted that in the 10 November 2009 letter to Governor Rick Perry from Assistant Secretary Mercedes Marquez it states,

"Recent events demonstrate that it is in the State's best interest to update the existing AI. The Department notes a recent U.S. District Court settlement in which a deficient AI was the basis for an action under the Federal False Claims Act. As a result of the deficient AI, the court found that Westchester County, New York violated its certification that it would affirmatively further fair housing. Accordingly, the Department is urging all CDBG grantees to consider updating their AI."
(Exhibit 8)

This letter clearly acknowledges the importance that HUD has placed on this ruling.

The GOP has every confidence that if HUD directs the Galveston County Commissioners Court to take control of the situation, and effectively implement a countywide housing authority, we can do away with the City of Galveston's offensive and debilitating rebuilding plan that seeks to return the failed system to this city.

"The Complaint:

Westchester County receives Community Development Block Grants from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD"), on behalf of a consortium of municipalities within the County. As a condition of receiving such grants, the County, among other commitments, agrees to "affirmatively further fair housing." The commitment to affirmatively further fair housing requires more than simply building affordable housing; it also requires grant recipients to assure that the housing is fully available to all residents of the community, regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, handicap, or familial status.

To meet this obligation, the County was required to conduct an analysis of the impediments to fair housing choice, including impediments erected by racial and ethnic discrimination or segregation, and to take appropriate actions to overcome the effects of any such impediments. The County was aware that racial and ethnic segregation and discrimination persisted in its municipalities: according to the 2000 federal Census, over half of the County's municipalities had an African-American population of 3% or less, and in 1999 the County Board of Legislators found that there had been repeated instances of intolerance and discrimination in the County.

Despite that, the analyses of impediments that the County conducted between 2000 and 2008 made no mention of the housing needs of racial or ethnic minorities or the effects of racial or ethnic discrimination. Instead, the County focused on "impediments to affordable housing," with no identification of impediments to fair housing based on race or ethnic background or resulting from the effects of racial or ethnic segregation. In particular, the County did not analyze how its placement of affordable housing affected segregation, nor whether the placement of such housing had the effect of increasing or decreasing racial or ethnic diversity in the neighborhoods where the housing was built. Having failed to identify impediments to fair housing based on race or ethnicity, the County took no action designed to overcome those particular impediments. As a result, the County's production and placement of affordable

housing may have perpetuated or increased racial and ethnic segregation in the area.

As part of its applications for funding under the HUD grant program, between 2000 and 2008 the County periodically certified that it was meeting its obligations to affirmatively further fair housing. The Complaint alleges that, due to the County's failure to identify and address impediments to fair housing, the County knew those certifications to be false, and therefore violated the False Claims Act. In addition, the Complaint alleges that the County's failure to comply with the express conditions of the HUD grants violated the Housing and Community Development Act, entitling the United States, among other things, to court-ordered relief. In an earlier order in this case, the United States District Court ruled that the County's certifications that it had acted to affirmatively further fair housing were false, and directed that a trial be held to determine if the County knew the certifications were false when it submitted them to HUD; and the damages, if any, incurred by the United States.

The Settlement:

To settle the United States' claims under the Housing and Community Development Act, the County has agreed to repay \$21.6 million to the County's account with HUD. That amount, along with an additional \$30 million of County funds, will be used for the construction of 750 units of fair and affordable housing over the next seven years in areas of the County with low African-American and Hispanic populations. If the County fails to meet the terms of the settlement agreement regarding housing construction, it will become liable for penalties that require it to fund the construction of additional housing. To resolve the False Claims Act claims in the Complaint, the County has agreed to pay the United States a total of \$30 million, with a credit for the \$21.6 million repaid to the County's HUD account. The settlement also provides that the County will change certain of its policies to facilitate the removal of impediments to fair housing.

The Whistleblower:

The allegations of wrongdoing were first brought to the attention of the United States by the Anti-Discrimination Center of Metro New York, a fair-housing advocacy group, which filed a complaint as a whistleblower under the qui tam provisions of the [False Claims Act](#). Those provisions permit the United States to intervene in cases originally commenced by private parties who know of [fraud committed against the Government](#). The Anti-Discrimination Center will receive [\\$7.5 million](#) as part of the [False Claims Act](#) settlement.

http://www.justice.gov/crt/housing/documents/westchester_pr.pdf

<http://www.antibiaslaw.com/sites/default/files/files/SettlementFullText.pdf>

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/11/nyregion/11settle.html?_r=1

<http://www.acorn-online.com/joomla15/lewisboroledger/news/localnews/48221-county-releases-implementation-plan-for-housing-settlement.html>

Exhibit 1

United States Public Housing Statistics:

The following demographic information was obtained from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), "[Resident Characteristics Report](#)" as of January 31, 2008.

Total U.S. population 307,744,007 [source: Census.gov](#)

Across the nation, there are over 2 million residents living in Public Housing, and another 4.7 million residents living in Section 8 Housing.

This amounts to:

2.18% of U.S. population receiving housing assistance
or
0.65% of U.S. population in Public Housing
1.53% of U.S. population in Section 8 Housing

Average household size:

2.2 people per unit/Public Housing
1.8 people per unit/Section 8 Housing

Galveston Public Housing Statistics:

[The Galveston Housing Authority](#) wants to own and operate 1,039 Public Housing Units (existing + proposed).

Proposed Rebuilding of 4 Sites: 569 Units

Magnolia Homes, 1601 Strand, 120
Oleander Homes, 5228 Broadway, 206
Palm Terrace, 4400 Sealy, 104
Cedar Terrace, 2914 Ball, 139
+
The Oaks, 4300 Broadway, 40*

Existing sites: 430 Units

Gulf Breeze, 1211 Moody, 199

Holland House, 2810 61st, 157
The Oaks, 4300 Broadway, 40
Scattered Sites 34

The GHA also currently manages 1,516 Section 8 Units (includes addition of 303 recently acquired vouchers for Katrina and Rita victims).

If GHA's housing units conform to the national averages of residents per unit, from HUD; their existing and proposed Units would house:

2286 people in Public Housing
2729 people in Section 8 Housing

This amounts to:

11.14% of the population of Galveston receiving housing assistance (assuming a population of 45,000); or **5.12 X the national average!**

5.08% of the population of Galveston in Public Housing; or **7.83 X the national average!**

6.06% of the population of Galveston in Section 8 Housing; or **3.99 X the national average!**

For Galveston to mirror sustainable national averages for smaller cities, the GHA should own, operate, and manage the following number of units:

83 Public Housing Units; NOT 1,039!

308 Section 8 Units; NOT 1,516!

<http://www.galvestonogp.org/GHA/Galveston-Public-Housing-Concentrations-Versus-National-Averages.html>

Exhibit 2

Sorted by Population	2008 Census Estimate	% of County Population	Total		% of County PH	% of Section 8	Public Housing Burden	Section 8 Burden
			Public Housing	Section 8				
Galveston County	288,239	100.0%	1100	1996				
League City city (pt.)	70,471	24.4%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Galveston city	57,086	19.8%	970	1708	88.2%	85.6%	4.5	4.3
Texas City city (pt.)	44,488	15.4%	130	422	11.8%	21.1%	0.8	1.4
Friendswood city (pt.)	25,025	8.7%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0	0.0
Dickinson city	17,886	6.2%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0	0.0
La Marque city	14,236	4.9%	0	58	0.0%	2.9%	0.0	0.6
Santa Fe city	10,479	3.6%	0	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0	0.0

*Census Data from U.S. Census Website www.census.gov/popest/cities

*Public Housing and Section 8 Data from Housing Authority Profiles HUD website.

*Section 8 – Funded vouchers, 697 on island, 516 on the mainland.

*PH numbers from HUD HA profiles, GHA redevelopment plan said pre-Ike number was 979

Exhibit 4

Case Reports:

“Case reports” count everything logged in as a crime, and, therefore, they are much more serious than “calls for service”. Case Reports from 01 September 2007 to 01 September 2008, i.e. the year before Hurricane Ike:

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**

Total for the areas containing and surrounding the four housing developments, **2,558 case reports**

Total for the City of Galveston, **12,018 case reports**

21.28% of all case reports in the City of Galveston were for the areas containing and surrounding the four housing developments.

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

There were 569 housing units in the four housing developments, and typically there are 2.2 people per unit. This means that the total population of these four facilities was approximately 1,252, or **2.20% of the pre-Ike population of the City**. With 21.28% of the case reports originating from the areas containing and surrounding the four housing developments, a highly disproportionate share of police resources and expenses were used in these areas!

The fact that the GHA owned and operated housing developments were a crime problem should come as no surprise to anyone, especially GHA. The Executive Summary of their 2008 Plan 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."

<http://www.GalvestonOGP.org/GHA/Executive%20Summary%20FFY08.pdf>

Exhibit 5

There is only one way to give GHA residents a chance at better lives, and lower the burden on the City of Galveston; locate any new public housing and Section 8 properties in the more affluent cities in the County that currently have no public housing.

When comparing the seven major cities in Galveston County, notice how the three cities with public housing (Galveston, La Marque, and Texas City) have the highest crime rates, the lowest Median Household Incomes, and the lowest school district rankings.

City	2007 Crime Rate National Average = 320	2007 Median Household Income	School District Ranking 948 Districts in TX
Galveston	650	\$35,610	735
La Marque	568	\$42,938	821
Texas City	453	\$44,321	571
Santa Fe	275	\$58,600	?
Dickinson	266	\$51,741	444
League City	175	\$78,596	89
Friendswood	99	\$85,509	?

Exhibit 6

Civil Rights Liability

Civil rights represent another area in which local officials can be held personally liable for damages. Every councilmember needs to know the risks expressly contained in Section 1983, Title 42, of the United States Code:

"Every person who, under color of any statute, ordinance, regulation, custom, or usage, of any state or territory, subjects, or causes to be subjected, any citizen of the United States or other person within the jurisdiction thereof to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the Constitution and laws, shall be liable to the party injured."

The literal language of Section 1983 makes all persons, councilmembers included, personally liable for damages if their acts result in depriving others of their civil rights, regardless of whether such acts were reasonable and made in good faith.

Additionally, [the U.S. Supreme Court has held that Section 1983 does not require proof that a defendant deliberately intended to deprive the plaintiff of his legal rights; the mere deprivation is itself a violation.](#)

Liability under Section 1983 is not limited to the direct infliction of physical injuries to persons or property. Several types of policy decisions affecting city employees or citizens could render councilmembers liable under Section 1983, depending on the specific facts of the situation.

Another significant area of potential liability for councilmembers under Section 1983 relates to race discrimination and other violations of the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution, such as sex-biased personnel policies and practices.

<http://www.galvestonogp.org/COG/HRHChapter10.pdf>

Exhibit 7

06 December 2009

Sent via certified mail, return receipt requested

Sent via email to: lydaannthomas@cityofgalveston.org

Sent via email to: lydaannthomas@aol.com

Lyda Ann Thomas
Mayor
City of Galveston
823 Rosenberg
P.O. Box 779
Galveston, TX 77553

Mayor Thomas:

As you know, the Galveston Housing Authority has spent many months presenting a variety of rebuilding plans to the citizens of Galveston. On 20 November, the Galveston Open Government Project delivered an article to City Council via email entitled "[Galveston: the End of the Road?](#)" which outlined the case that none of the GHA plans conform to current court-directed HUD policy. On 03 December, I covered the same issues during public comment at the Council meeting. On 04 December, the GOGP sent the City Attorney a [brief summary of our research](#).

To ensure that the City Council has a more detailed explanation on how these legal cases effect their current deliberations, on Public Housing, the GOGP is requesting that the primary investigator on this subject, Chris Toombs, be allowed to give his presentation, "[A Bold New Approach to Subsidized Housing](#)", to Council, at the 10 December meeting.

This would allow Council to be fully informed, to ask questions, and to have the City Attorney comment and question our conclusions in the presentation. Since you have clearly indicated that you feel a sense of urgency with regard to this matter, we ask that you put this presentation on the 10 December agenda, in order to facilitate this critical interchange as quickly as possible.

To view the presentation, go to:

<http://www.galvestonogp.org/GHA/GalvestonHousingAuthority.ppt>

Thank you for your consideration,

Best regards,

David Stanowski
Galveston Open Government Project
gogp@att.net
409-356-6553

Re: GOGP Presentation to City Council

● LydaAnnThomas@aol.com

You replied on 12/7/2009 4:54 PM.

To: gogp@att.net

Cc: lindacolbert@cityof.galveston.org; weber59@comcast.net; ElizabethBeeton@cityofgalveston.org; KarenMahoney@cityofgalveston.org; tarriswoods@cityofgalveston.org; SUSANFENNEWALD@CITYOFGALVESTON.ORG; GreenSus@cityofgalveston.org; LeblancSte@cityofgalveston.org

Mr. Stanowski ... I have not had time to inquire into the legal ramifications of your request to have Mr. Toombs make a presentation to Council. Mr. Toombs is..as are all citizens...welcome to address the Council during the public comment part of the agenda .

Lyda Ann Thomas

Mayor,

Mr. Toombs and I are aware that we can speak to Council during our 3 minute allotments. The reason that we are requesting at least 15 minutes to give a presentation is that 3 minutes is insufficient time to present any meaningful information, and does not allow the use of a Powerpoint. In addition, we assume that with an issue as critical as this is that the Council would like to ask questions, which requires it be on the agenda.

The so-called public comment periods that GHA has orchestrated have also been limited to 3 minute comments without any opportunity for anyone to have sufficient time to actually make a case that disagrees with their agenda. Now that we have discovered federal lawsuits that set down new requirements on how to accomplish de-segregation, and provide authentic opportunities for low-income minorities, we feel that a reasonably detailed briefing on the subject, not just a 3 minute comment, is urgently needed. Therefore, we renew our request to have Mr. Toombs' research put on the agenda with sufficient time for a presentation and Q&A.

We are unsure what legal ramifications that there could be for Council to allow a presentation, since this is routinely done at nearly every meeting.

David Stanowski

Exhibit 8

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20410-7000**

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Nov 10 2009

The Honorable Rick Perry
Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, TX 78711-2428

Dear Governor Perry:

I regret to inform you that the Department is not accepting the State of Texas's Amendment 1 to its Action Plan for more than \$1.7 billion of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Disaster Recovery supplemental funding, as submitted on September 30, 2009. The proposed Amendment 1, as submitted, **is substantially incomplete as it does not comply with applicable action plan and citizen participation requirements.**

Amendment 1 provides the State's allocation methodology of CDBG disaster recovery funds to Councils of Governments (COGs), but does not include a method of distribution to units of general local government. In addition, while it is clear that the State has undertaken citizen participation in the development of its amendment, **the State has not provided citizens with public notice and the opportunity to comment on the COGs methods of distribution to units of general local government.** The Federal Register notices announcing the first two allocations of disaster recovery funds require a state to submit an Action Plan or

Amended Action Plan that includes "descriptions of the method of allocating funds to units of local government" and [provide for reasonable public notice, appraisal, examination and comment on the activities proposed for the use of the CDBG disaster recovery grant funds](#). 74 Fed. Reg. 7244, 7250 and 74 Fed. Reg. 41 146, 41 151.

Upon review of Texas's Action Plan submitted in March, the Department determined that the Plan did not include a description of the method of allocating funds to units of general local government, as required by the Federal Register notice. Accordingly, the State did not meet the citizen participation requirement as citizens did not receive adequate information on the proposed use of the funds or how they could benefit from the proposed activities. Due to Texas's need for immediate assistance, however, HUD approved the Action Plan, in part. The Department conditioned the release of funds on the provision of citizen participation on the method of distribution to units of general local government determined by the COGs.

Amendment 1 also fails to describe the method of allocating funds to units of general local government. The description must include all criteria used to select applications from local governments for funding, including the relative importance of each criterion, a description of how the disaster recovery grant resources will be allocated among all funding categories and the threshold factors and ant size limits that are to be applied. Although the problems with the initial action plan and Amendment 1 are similar, unlike the first allocation, there is no compelling need to immediately approve the incomplete Amendment 1 for the second allocation because Texas has yet to award \$476 million from the initial allocation of \$1.3 billion.

To make Amendment 1 substantially complete, the State must revise the amendment to incorporate the COGS methods of distribution to units of general local government in sufficient detail as described above and resubmit it within 45 days. As permitted in the first Federal Register Notice, the State may submit an initial partial amendment and amend it one or more

times subsequently until the amended Action Plan describes uses for the total grant amount. The Department will, however, only make the remaining funds available as the State's amended action plan describes the COGs methods of distribution, provides for citizen participation on the amendment, and submits the amendment to HUD for review.

The Department would also like to take this opportunity to note several broader concerns with regard to the State's recovery plan. [The first concern is on the State's analysis of impediments to fair housing choice \(AI\). A recipient of CDBG funding is required to certify that it will affirmatively further fair housing, which means that the recipient: 1\) has or will conduct an AI within the state; 2\) take appropriate actions to overcome the effects of any identified impediments; and 3\) maintain records reflecting the analysis and actions taken in this regard.](#) While the Department has already accepted the State's certification, the State is strongly urged to consider updating and revising its existing AI. The State's existing AI apparently dates to 2003 and, without revisions or updates, likely does not account for significant effects upon the Texas housing market resulting from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 and Hurricanes Dolly, Ike and Gustav in 2008. For example, it is likely that the current AI does not address accessibility issues that may arise in housing elevation projects. An updated AI may assist with addressing these issues in project development. In addition, the effects of these storms have been compounded by systemic weaknesses in the housing market in 2008 and 2009 that have produced unprecedented levels of home foreclosures.

Recent events demonstrate that it is in the State's best interest to update the existing AI. [The Department notes a recent U.S. District Court settlement in which a deficient AI was the basis for an action under the Federal False Claims Act. As a result of the deficient AI, the court found that Westchester County, New York, violated its certification that it would affirmatively further fair housing.](#) Accordingly, the Department is urging all CDBG grantees to consider updating their AIs.

In addition, the Department has read the Galveston County Daily News articles and received complaints about public opposition to proposed plans to rebuild public housing and affordable housing for low and moderate-income persons in Galveston. [The Department reminds the State of its certification to conduct and administer its CDBG Disaster Recovery program in conformity with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act. Units of general local government must also make this certification in order to receive CDBG disaster funding from the State.](#) The Department supports the rebuilding of public and affordable housing in Galveston, particularly for low-income families. The housing re-development may involve different configurations; The Department is willing and prepared to offer technical assistance and guidance on this matter.

The final concern relates to proposed use of CDBG funding for activities that focus on mitigation of future disasters as opposed to addressing core recovery needs arising directly from damage caused by Hurricanes Dolly, Ike, and Gustav. The CDBG disaster recovery funds are, as stated in the appropriation, primarily targeted to restoration of infrastructure, housing, and economic revitalization. The emphasis on mitigation activities is not consistent with this direction although the Department does encourage mitigation enhancements in the context of the above listed purposes. While some mitigation activities may support disaster recovery, the Department urges the State to focus on clear recovery needs.

Please be assured that the Department stands ready to assist the State in any way possible to address these concerns. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me at (202) 708-2690.

Sincerely,

Mercedes Marquez, Assistant Secretary

http://www.galvestonogp.org/GHA/HUD_letter_to_Governor_Perry_11-11-09.pdf

Exhibit 9

"Thompson v. HUD

April 8, 2005

*Legal Defense Fund Joins ACLU in Baltimore Housing
Discrimination Lawsuit*

Case Combats Inner-City Segregation and Poverty

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) has joined the ACLU of Maryland as co-counsel in Thompson v. HUD. They are representing African Americans in a Baltimore case with far-reaching implications about the concentration of Blacks in public housing in urban centers across America.

The ACLU of Maryland filed the lawsuit in 1995 on behalf of a class of approximately 14,000 African American tenants, former tenants, and prospective tenants of Baltimore City public housing developments. Plaintiffs alleged that HUD denied Baltimore's African American public housing residents opportunities to locate throughout the region and instead concentrated them in predominantly minority areas within the city limits in violation of the Fair Housing Act.

In January 2005, the District Court found HUD liable for failing to take affirmative steps to implement an effective regional strategy for desegregation and poverty de-concentration in Baltimore. The court found that HUD's programs "failed to achieve significant desegregation in Baltimore City." As Judge Marvin J. Garbis explained, "Baltimore City should not be viewed as an island reservation for use as a container for all of the poor of a contiguous region." The case will proceed to a remedial trial in July 2005.

"Now that the Court has found HUD liable, we look forward to working with HUD to find a reasonable solution to the problem of segregation in Baltimore," said Theodore M. Shaw, LDF

Director-Counsel and President. "Significant investment must be made in the communities in which poverty is currently concentrated, so that those communities are not further 'left behind.'"

Baltimore's public housing has suffered from nearly a century of segregation that has left thousands of low-income African American families perpetually locked in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty. More than 70 percent of the City's public housing still in use today was built as segregated housing. By 1995, when Thompson was filed, housing experts considered Baltimore to be one of the most racially segregated cities in America.

A year later, the court approved a partial consent decree that called for 3,000 new housing opportunities for public housing families after several high-rise projects were demolished. The Court subsequently held a trial on plaintiffs' claims alleging a pattern or practice of discrimination by HUD and the Housing Authority of Baltimore City in December 2003.

"This is a case of national importance and deserves the wisdom and experience that LDF (founded by Baltimore's own Thurgood Marshall) will bring," said Susan Goering, Executive Director of the ACLU of Maryland. "I have no doubt that, together with LDF, we will further the goal of more equitable housing for the entire Baltimore region."

*Since Congress passed the Fair Housing Act in 1968, LDF has litigated a number of lawsuits seeking to enforce the provisions of the Act, including challenges to racially discriminatory practices by realty agencies, **discriminatory site selection for public housing** and tenant assignment policies, and **failure of federally-funded housing programs to avoid concentrating African Americans and the poor in urban centers or traditionally black residential areas.**"*

<http://www.naacpldf.org/content.aspx?article=591>

Exhibit 10

**Galveston, Texas
Hurricane Ike Recovery:
A Success Story in the Making**



**Mayor Lyda Ann Thomas
City of Galveston**

**Presented to Secretary of Housing and Urban Development,
Shaun Donovan**

and to

**The Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency,
Craig Fugate**

Washington, DC

January 6, 2010



Working Together



The City of Galveston and the Galveston Housing Authority have always and will continue to work together to provide affordable housing for our residents.

We are in compliance with all HUD regulations and requirements.

13

<http://www.galvestonogp.org/COG/HurricaneIkeRecovery.pdf>

Exhibit 11

THE FEDERAL FALSE CLAIMS ACT

31 U.S.C. §§ 3729-3733
As amended, May 2009

§ 3729. False Claims

(a) LIABILITY FOR CERTAIN ACTS

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), any person who—

(A) knowingly presents, or causes to be presented, a false or fraudulent claim for payment or approval;

(B) knowingly makes, uses, or causes to be made or used, a false record or statement material to a false or fraudulent claim;

(C) conspires to commit a violation of subparagraph (A), (B), (D), (E), (F), or (G);

(D) has possession, custody, or control of property or money used, or to be used, by the Government and knowingly delivers, or causes to be delivered, less than all of that money or property;

(E) is authorized to make or deliver a document certifying receipt of property used, or to be used, by the Government and, intending to defraud the Government, makes or delivers the receipt without completely knowing that the information on the receipt is true;

(F) knowingly buys, or receives as a pledge of an obligation or debt, public property from an officer or employee of the Government, or a member of the Armed Forces, who lawfully may not sell or pledge property; or

(G) knowingly makes, uses, or causes to be made or used, a false record or statement material to an obligation to pay or transmit money or property to the Government, or knowingly conceals or knowingly and improperly avoids or decreases an obligation to pay or transmit money or property to the Government, is liable to the United States Government for a civil penalty of not less than \$5,000 and not more than \$10,000, as adjusted by the Federal Civil Penalties Inflation Adjustment Act of 1990 (28 U.S.C. 2461 note; Public Law 104-410), plus 3 times the amount of damages which the Government sustains because of the act of that person.

<http://www.taf.org/federalfca.htm>

Exhibit 12

Officials, experts divided on housing

*By Leigh Jones
The Daily News
Published August 9, 2009*

GALVESTON – Galveston Housing Authority early last week released plans to rebuild all 569 public housing units demolished after Hurricane Ike on the same sites as the old developments.

Advocacy groups pushed for the one-for-one replacement, saying former residents deserved to have a place to come home to.

But rebuilding so much public housing in one neighborhood goes against nationwide policies that say families who need assistance should be spread throughout a community whenever possible to improve their chances of rising above the poverty level over time.

Housing authority officials said the agency will get more bang for its buck by building a few large multifamily developments, but housing experts said that approach may not be what's best for public housing residents.

Vestige Of Segregation

All four of Galveston's main public housing developments were built in the 1950s and 1960s within 4 miles of each other, when community leaders were only too happy to group poor and mostly African-American families on the city's north side, sandwiched between the industrial corridor and the main commercial thoroughfare.

Sociologists now acknowledge the concentration of public housing in most communities is a vestige of racial segregation, Betsy Julian, president of Dallas-based Inclusive Communities Project, said.

The new model for public housing seeks to de-concentrate poverty, she said.

“You basically want to integrate low-income families to give them a chance to be a part of different communities,” Julian, whose organization helps low-income families find affordable housing, said.

The goal for public housing agencies today should be to figure out how not to replicate a bad idea from the past, she said.

If the design for public housing wasn’t working before, don’t go back and do it again, she said.

No Cure-All

Researchers have spent the past 30 years studying the results of government programs that give public housing residents vouchers and assistance to move to more affluent, safer and less racially segregated neighborhoods.

Studies have shown the families who move get instant relief from problems associated with safety, mental health and housing quality, Stefanie Deluca, an assistant professor in the Sociology Department at Johns Hopkins University, said.

Women and young girls benefit the most from moving out of public housing developments, mostly because they no longer worry so much about becoming victims of physical or sexual violence, Deluca said.

Federal policymakers had hoped the voucher programs would create economic and educational benefits as well, but the

adults did not automatically get better jobs and the children did not do much better in school, Deluca said.

Even though study results show moving out of impoverished communities is not a cure-all, most experts still agree concentrated poverty is bad and officials have to make a strong case for moving families back into the public housing developments after they've already been moved involuntarily by the storm, she said.

"If the organization of the housing authority looks exactly the same, it's only better if the families are in dire situations now," she said.

Least Expensive, Most Expedient

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development policies promote a de-concentration of poverty and encourage mixed-income communities, Dominique Blom, deputy assistant secretary for the federal agency's Office of Public Housing Investments, said. The department provides some oversight and much of the funding to local housing authorities.

But the government subsidies provided to local housing authorities to maintain and build properties are the same for single and multifamily units, which makes it less expensive to build more concentrated developments than stand-alone, single-family homes.

Housing authority officials considered including more scattered site units in the rebuilding plan, but decided it would cost too much and take too long to buy properties throughout the city, board member Ray Lewis said.

The least expensive and fastest way to get people back to the island is to rebuild subsidized housing on land the housing authority already owns, he said.

Still Represented?

The scattered-site option also was unpopular among displaced housing authority residents, who wanted to come home, and leaders of the African-American community, who were afraid of losing the representation on city council gained through a 20-year-old federal lawsuit.

Galveston switched to single-member city council districts in 1993 as part of the lawsuit's settlement. The districts were supposed to help ensure the African-American community would have at least two seats on the city council, one elected from the district that includes all four public housing developments.

The majority of District 1's voting power came from the public housing developments, Leon Phillips, head of the Galveston County Coalition for Justice, said.

If the public housing was broken up, it would decrease the chances of having an African-American elected from that district, which also includes the more affluent downtown residential and commercial area.

"How do we retain the idea of what District 1 was set up for?" Phillips asked. "How would we maintain the integrity of the reason it was set up, with all of the people gone?"

Public Housing Versus Apartments

Scattered site housing also was unpopular among displaced housing authority residents who appealed to the agency to rebuild the communities many of them had called home all their lives.

The combined lobbying effort of political activists and distraught residents is an "unholy alliance" common in places where public housing is being restructured, Julian said.

"It takes some strong leadership in the community to stand up and say that's not what's best for the residents," she said.

But Phillips questioned claims that grouping families together in large developments was bad. No one is bothered by apartment complexes in other neighborhoods, which may include as many as 1,200 units, he said.

Public housing developments and apartment complexes are virtually the same, except for how they look, he said. People's opposition to the developments is about aesthetics, he said.

"What's the difference?" he asked. "The only difference is that they don't want it to look like barracks any more. They want it to look more modern."

Hoping For The Best

There's no reason the housing authority can't put some people back on the sites of the old developments, but leaders need to think about what's best for families who will be staying in public housing for the next 40 years, not just the families who were displaced by Ike, Julian said.

The emotional ties to the old neighborhoods are strong, but officials have to balance that with the overall benefit to all future residents, she said.

"I have seen people want to stay in environmentally degraded sites because that was the only home they ever knew," she said. "But from a public policy standpoint, you can't really argue for that credibly."

Ideally, the housing authority would spread the public housing out across the island, but Hurricane Ike didn't give the agency the five or 10 years it would take to do that, Lewis said.

The priority was to bring people back as quickly as possible, and the best way to do that was to rebuild on the same footprint, he said.

“Given the scenario we have in front of us, we hope we’re doing the best for the residents and the city, with their input,” he said.

<http://galvestondailynews.com/story.lasso?ewcd=3a81a1fa41ff9ade>

Exhibit 13

HUD honors GHA at Ike anniversary event

*By Leigh Jones
The Daily News
Published September 15, 2009*

GALVESTON – Federal officials recognized the Galveston Housing Authority on Monday for setting an example for managing disaster response and recovery especially well.

“You’ve done a lot and you have a lot to be proud of,” said Dabney Kerns, the new chief emergency operations officer for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The agency’s leaders sent Kerns and David Vargas, associate deputy assistant secretary for public housing and the housing voucher program, to Galveston to pledge continued federal support during the island’s ongoing Hurricane Ike recovery efforts.

Both men spoke at the housing authority’s anniversary commemoration event.

“We are here to say that you are not alone and not forgotten,” Vargas said. “We are committed to coordinating efforts to provide the necessary resources to the families of this community.”

The housing authority has an incredible silver lining in front of it, executive director Harish Krishnarao said.

When federal officials came to the island immediately after the storm and asked him what he needed, he told them he needed a grand slam.

The government batted zero for one after Hurricane Katrina and zero for two after Hurricane Rita, Krishnarao said.

After Hurricane Ike, Krishnarao told federal housing officials he wanted the tools he needed to hit a grand slam. One year later, the housing authority has just that, he said.

In addition to building all of the units needed to bring home the 569 displaced housing authority residents, the agency is exploring options for building mixed-income properties as well, he told an audience that included housing authority staff members, federal officials and city staff members.

*The housing authority board initially approved a recovery plan that included rebuilding all four damaged public housing developments and **building another 1,500 units** in mixed income developments scattered across the island.*

But Krishnarao recommended the agency set aside the plan for additional units in May after strong criticism from some community members, who started an online petition opposing the plan.

Now, the community was more ready to talk about the mixed income developments, he said.

Before the storm, the housing authority took care of islanders who were customers of the housing authority, Mayor Lyda Ann Thomas said.

But Ike changed the housing authority just as much as it changed the island, she said.

Now the agency must become a partner with the city to build houses for everyone who lives on the island, she said.

“My intention is to recognize the housing authority as a partner of the city of Galveston, as an investor, a developer, an entity

that can make Galveston a better place to live for all people," she said.

<http://www.galvnews.com/story.lasso?ewcd=dfdf232e8aa7938e>